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ST. PIERRE'S RAIN OF FIRE

— BY —

REV. J. C. SOLOMON



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ST. PIERRE'S RAIN OF FIRE

BY

REV. J. C. SOLOMON,

Author of "Loyalty to God," "The Bugle Blast," Etc.

Thou art my strong refuge.—*Bible.*

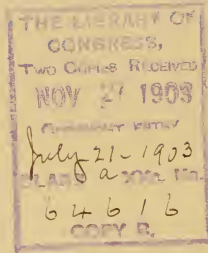
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Copyrighted, 1903,
By Rev. J. C. Solomon.

DEDICATED
TO HIS MOST FAITHFUL FRIEND
R. C. JESTER
BY THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

So many and so sweet were the words of commendation of my last book, "The Bugle Blast," I venture to send forth these addresses with a trembling hope, yet with sincere desire that the Holy Spirit may use them in the dissemination of light along the world's dark shores, and in the comforting of many troubled, bleeding hearts. Wherever they have been delivered over the country the Master's blessings have attended them. And now as they go out in this more permanent form, I ask the patience and charity of the public.

If, dear reader, in the perusal of these pages you should find an occasional bit of gold, or gather a tiny pearl, or grasp a struggling sunbeam, or hear the bird of hope sing a gladder note in your heart, I shall count myself most happy, and ascribe unto Him all praise for such sweet manifestations of love and mercy.

J. C. S.

FOREWORD.

No library is complete without Christian literature, and no Christian literature is satisfactory which has no place for a volume of sermons. The ideal sermon is the gospel, plus personality. It is the old truth vitalized by the warm blood of one who has experienced its power in his own heart. Whatever may be its limitations in other respects, the real sermon, because it exalts Jesus Christ as the world's Savior, possesses intrinsic value which all wise men recognize.

Many of Christ's people, on account of old age, infirmities and other causes, are denied the privileges of public worship in church. On that account, they seldom hear sermons, and naturally need a book containing them, that they may read at home. This shut-in class of disciples includes many of the choicest spirits of the kingdom of God on earth. A present of such a volume as this to one of this kind will be timely and helpful.

All Sunday-schools should be equipped with libraries containing books of sermons. All preachers, whatever their attainments or experience, should occasionally read the discourses of other ministers of the gospel. In a word, there is a steady demand for works of the character Rev. J. C. Solomon offers to the reading public. What to him

has been a labor of love should be to others a spiritual blessing, quickening the conscience, warming the heart, energizing the will, reforming the life and holding up before it the loftiest ideals for daily imitation.

Those who have the happiness to know the author will discover in these sermons the evangelical doctrine, the pictorial style, the impassioned earnestness, the abundance and aptness of illustration, which mark his spoken discourse. Not one of them will be dull reading. They are both evangelistic and edifying. Some of them are wholly unforgettable. If the reader will only allow them to pass by proper digestion and assimilation into his spiritual constitution, he will be forever afterwards a stronger ethical and religious force.

The author, while pastor in Atlanta, was not only a successful minister among his own people, but cordially co-operated in all denominational and Christian work, and thereby became a factor in promoting the general good. His piety, patriotism and philanthropy have won for him admirers and friends throughout the length and breadth of the State. May this volume, as it goes on its evangelistic round, find them all and largely add to their number.

W. W. LANDRUM.

Atlanta, Ga., February 21, 1903.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

ST. PIERRE'S RAIN OF FIRE. (Bible Promise, p. 11)-----	12
--	----

CHAPTER II.

WAITING FOR THE LORD. (Bible Promise, p. 25)-----	26
---	----

CHAPTER III.

GOD'S MANIFEST PRESENCE A GUARANTEE AGAINST FEAR.	36
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

HALTING AT THE RED SEA. (Bible Promise, p. 47)-----	48
---	----

CHAPTER V.

SHUT DOORS-----	60
-----------------	----

CHAPTER VI.

THE DESPERATION OF A SINNER-----	70
----------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOLINESS OF JOY. (Bible Promise, p. 81)-----	82
--	----

CHAPTER VIII.

THRONING AND TOUCHING-----	90
----------------------------	----

CHAPTER IX.

THE BLOTING OUT OF TRANSGRESSIONS-----	104
--	-----

CHAPTER X.

THE LORD'S SHUT-INS-----	116
--------------------------	-----

BIBLE PROMISE.

“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are : and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.”

St. Pierre's Rain of Fire.

Haste thee, escape thither.—Gen. 19: 22.

Be not like the drunkard who staggering home one night saw his candle lit for him. "Two candles," said he, for his drunkenness made him see double, "I will blow out one," and as he blew it out, in a moment he was in the dark. Many a man sees double through the drunkenness of his sins; he has one life to sow his wild oats in, and then he half expects another in which to turn to God; so like a fool, he blows out the only candle that he has, and in the dark he will have to lie down forever. Haste thee, traveler, thou hast but one sun, and after that sets thou wilt never reach thy home. God help thee to make haste now.—*Spurgeon*.

Procrastination is the thief of time;
Year after year it steals till all are fled,
And to the mercies of a moment leaves
The vast concerns of an eternal scene.

—*Young*

I.

Last Thursday morning one week ago, one of the most horrible tragedies the world ever looked upon was enacted on the little island of Martinique, not many hundred miles from Florida. As a result of the outbreak of Mt. Pelee volcano about 30,000 persons lost their lives and 50,000 others were left homeless.

Thursday morning the city of St. Pierre was suddenly and most horribly destroyed by a whirlwind of fire. Even in ten minutes this ancient and most beautiful city was laid waste—a pile of black smouldering ruins.

For fifty years people have visited and admired Mt. Pelee and children have sported at its base and about its rugged sides, and picnickers have bathed in the beautiful lake resting so quietly in this dreamlike crater.

St. Pierre, to be sure, was a seaport city settled largely by the French. It contained many thousands of people, and doubtless from its beautiful situation and apparently safe condition these poor doomed victims felt, from a worldly standpoint, as happy and secure as other mortals in this old reeling world of ours. The blue sky smiled upon them from above; the blue waves of the sea laughed around the shores of Martinique.

Business was going on; commerce was white with prosperity. Volumes of black smoke were curling from great chimney stacks. The hum of machinery, the buzz of the saw and the ring of the hammer were heard on every side. Strong men were rushing to and fro making bread for their loved ones and laying

up for a rainy day. Youths and maidens were marrying and given in marriage. Old men and women were sitting in the evening of life quietly waiting their last summons. Children were laughing and calling to ocean waves and gathering fair pebbles on the beach. Men and women might be seen here and there in their fishing smacks, while everywhere on land and sea tourists and pleasure-seekers were in evidence. The tall palms waived in that mellow air; the tropical birds sang their voluptuous melodies; the luxurious flowers breathed out their sweetest perfumes. Land and sea and sky had poured their wealth and charms into the lap of these easy-going people. God had been so good to this fair island of the West Indies. For long years His bounty, His patience, His providence had been stretched over this world-loving, pleasure-seeking, fair-dreaming French settlement. But they slept and dreamed, and mocked and dared. They waited and lingered long on their peaceful shores. They reared their children here, and here buried them out of their sight.

The days, the months, the years, passed by. The skies were just as blue; the children's laughter was just as sweet; the island just as beautiful; and the sea murmured on as of yore. Why should the people be alarmed? There are no unusual symptoms or signs of danger—not the slightest evidence of the impending calamity. Long ago the burning crater of old Mt. Pelee had sent forth her last red flame. The volcano was exhausted. The fires were all extinct. Where the sulphurous crater once held such high carnival a quiet lake offers pleasure to many bathers.

But the repose of that long-time-quiet island is broken

at last. On Wednesday morning deep-toned thunders are heard—the island and the city tremble. All day long wild and awful sounds poured forth from Mt. Pelee, while the sea dashed furiously against the shore. An occasional flash of fire was seen from the crater. Men, women and children walked nervously through the city. Here and there groups of excited persons could be seen with glaring eyes and blanched faces, as they spoke in subdued and pitiful voices. The business rush was checked a bit; pleasure-seekers stood still in the streets, children were frightened and wild laughter died on pallid lips. Still the cannonading continued and the fire grew redder and the seas roared most ominously. Old Mt. Pelee was preparing for the mighty onslaught—for one of the world's most awful, sickening tragedies. This fierce cannonading ceased about night when a shower of fine hot ashes began to fall. There was much confusion now among the people. General alarm seized the inhabitants. Consternation broke out everywhere. We read nowhere of any one sleeping that night. Awful, black, sickening doom seemed to be settling down over the island. For days there had been mutterings. The volcano was grumbling. The seas were rolling higher and higher. The very earth seemed unsteady, but the inhabitants hoped for the best and waited, but hoping and waiting brought no relief.

Although St. Pierre was on the verge of ruin, and every hour was hastening to her doom, and although the people were thoroughly alarmed, Gov. Mouttet, who had arrived the evening before, tried hard to allay the panic. He was like another foolish one who cried, "peace, peace," when there was no peace—life when death was near—sunshine

when the storm was breaking. All night long this down-pour of ashes fell from the hot throat of Mt. Pelee upon the horror-stricken and despairing St. Pierre. When morning broke, with a frightful roar and terrific discharges, a cyclone of mud and steam swept down from the crater over the town and bay, sweeping all before it and destroying the fleet of vessels at anchor off the shore. The mountains and hills were black with clouds. The volcano broke forth in wildest fury and shot its molten lava miles in the air.

Blasting, scorching, consuming fire ran as a flaming river over the city. All alike fell before the awful charge of this fiery monster. Huge blocks of burning stone were tossed high in the air and went rolling through the streets. Mighty trees were uprooted and dashed into flood of waters by flood of flame.

Great flocks of sea-gulls hovered over thousands of dead bodies floating on the waves, while hungry sharks feasted upon human flesh. Horses would shake their heads and snort as they would catch a whiff of sulphurous fumes and then drop dead in their tracks. Men, women and children by the thousand would fall dead from the inhalation of these same poisonous gases, while other gases on fire would blister and burn to a crisp the prostrate bodies. Men fought like demons for their own lives and their loved ones. Mothers wailed and clung frantically to their babes, while helpless children writhed in agony till death gave them relief.

The people rushed madly through the streets burying their faces in their hands or covering them with wet cloths to keep back the suffocating heat and smoke. Throughout

the city piles of charred bodies could be seen in groups of five, ten, twenty, fifty, with their faces to the ground.

On one single site were found 3,000 corpses piled in one great confused heap with marks of indescribable anguish. When the fire flooded the city they rushed to the Cathedral for safety and in this awful holocaust they perished together there.

Crowds of excited people were rushing up and down the shore; great black volumes of smoke and poisonous gases were pouring upon them from the belching volcano; the air was dense with blackness, and the earth was streaming with fire. In desperation these fated creatures dashed on for their lives—first this way, then that, crying for help, but pleading in vain. When the awful fumes struck in their nostrils they fell “like flies in the flame.”

All parts of the city were struck simultaneously by fire. The whole land was overrun with flood of flame and the mountain and clouds dropped death down everywhere.

Ocean like caldron,
Shore was in flames.

Seldom, if ever, has the world seen a more horrible tragedy than this. Among the many pathetic stories told of the ruined cities, one is told by Samuel Thomas.

“There was a woman burned to death while she held her baby in her arms—protecting it with her own body from the fire that filled the air. The child was alive long after its mother ceased to suffer.”

The wife of Thomas T. Prentiss, Consul of the United States at St. Pierre, writes a letter to her sister, Miss Alice Foy, who lives at Melrose. Here is the letter in part:

"This morning the whole populace of the city is on the alert and every eye is directed toward Mt. Pelee, an extinct volcano. Everybody is afraid that the volcano has taken it into its heart to burst forth and destroy the whole island. All the inhabitants are going up to see it. There is not a horse to be had on the island, those belonging to the natives being kept in readiness to leave at a moment's warning. Last Wednesday, which was April 23, I was in my room with little Christine and we heard three distinct shocks. They were so great that we supposed at first that there was some one at the door, and Christine went, but found no one there. The first report was very loud, but the second and third were so great that dishes were thrown from the shelves and the house was completely rocked. We can see Mt. Pelee from the rear windows of our house, and although it is fully four miles away, we can hear the roar and see the fire and lava issuing from it with terrific force.

"The city is covered with ashes and clouds of smoke have been over our heads for the past five days. The smell of sulphur is so strong that horses on the streets stop and snort, and some of them are obliged to give up, drop in their harnesses and die from the suffocation.

"Many of the people are obliged to wear wet handkerchiefs over their faces to protect them from the strong fumes of the sulphur. My husband assures me that there is no immediate danger, and when there is the least particle of danger we will leave the place. There is an American schooner, the R. J. Morse, in the harbor, and will remain here for at least two weeks. If the volcano becomes very bad shall embark at once and go out to sea."

How sad, how touchingly pitiful is this story, when it

is further known that Consul Prentiss, his wife and their two precious daughters went down in the awful reign of fire.

“Haste thee, escape thither”—this was the angel’s command to Lot. I believe it was the warning given to the Martiniquers of St. Pierre. I believe other great disasters have come after the voice of the Almighty has been disregarded. The inhabitants of Sodom went up in flames and smoke after God had borne with them long. The treasures of the earthly city were dearer to them than the treasures of the Heavenly City. Sin was precious for a season, but they paid for it dearly in the flames. They saw no need of making haste. Why rush away from so beautiful a city and so rich? Why leave the splendid accumulations of a lifetime? No, we will remain and enjoy them with our children. But while they remained, fire came down from Heaven and Sodom perished.

Remember Lot’s wife—her heart, too, was set on the city of the plains. It is not enough to start from Sodom, to turn and look to destruction, but to flee out of the city and be in haste. The words “flee,” “haste,” “fly,” “quick,” “ready,” “now,” all are so many sign-boards to point us out of this wilderness world to the land of the sky, to the city of God. They are like silver springs in the desert. They are the clarion notes of coming peace and eternal refuge from sin and danger. Remember in the first century, the awful destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum, subsequently the terrific flood of Holland, the dreadful fire in Boston, the burning of Chicago, the deluge in Texas on the 8th of May, 1902, the downfall of St. Pierre. I can not say—I dare not say—that these people were wicked

above all others, but with all my heart I believe that these outbreaks are the warnings of God. His awful providence to teach the world wholesome lessons to make men thoughtful and prayerful, and keep them on the alert. If we were not so stupid we might read the handwriting on the wall. Had we keener vision we could see the calamity coming. Were our sense of hearing not so dull we might listen and catch the mutterings of God's volcanic wrath and flee for our lives. The lightning flashed and the thunder roared a long time before Noah's ark floated on the waves and the wicked of earth went down in the flood. The destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum was not in a minute. These ancient cities perished only after warning. Oh, that men might be wise and catch the first sign of destruction and flee away. You remember the wreckage in the beautiful Conomaugh Valley in 1872? Those green mountain sides, those fertile valleys, that fair stream pouring out of the lakes, the prosperous and happy people. Oh, these were good days in dear old Johnstown, but civil engineers had frequently examined the great dam and pronounced it unsafe, but the people contended that it would last—no risk, no damage—and all went well for a while; but one day, when some were mourning and some were rejoicing, when some were asleep and some were reveling, a cloudburst fell upon the lake, the dam broke, and Johnstown perished. Time enough, time enough, has been the world's cry from the beginning, and to-day they are shouting it out while the destructive floods are rolling on. For five or six days and nights there were unmistakable signs of unrest in Mt. Pelee. Mutterings and flashes of fire were heard and seen

from the beautiful and peaceful crater, but the people spoke of this casually and were indifferent. It is an extinct volcano. The fires have long since given out—it is only a temporary disturbance—no harm can come of it. There is no danger. And the fishermen still plied their boats and the merchants bought and sold, and the pleasure-seekers went on in their pursuits, and the children laughed in the streets, and young men and maidens were marrying and being given in marriage. But Mt. Pelee thundered and sent forth her flashes, and the earth rumbled and the sea rolled higher still. That awful Thursday morning came at last and swept, with fire, St. Pierre from the face of the earth forever. To those that perished, St. Pierre was most dear, and they hugged it to the death. Where the treasure is, there is the heart. Oh, that man would strike for the open sea and start in time. It is too late to flee when the city is on fire. When the first symptoms of destruction are manifest, at the first warning of danger, fly. In the open sea of His love you will find a safe voyage. In His open arms there is a perfect shelter.

There are two classes of hinderers of which I desire to speak for a moment. One is represented by Gov. Mouttet and the other by Consul Prentiss. Gov. Mouttet says, "Quiet, people, quiet, no cause for alarm; it will all be over soon." Little did he think that 30,000 souls were in the balance, and that in a few brief hours they would find their winding-sheets in flames of fire. So the Gov. Mouttets have ever tried to comfort poor troubled souls by crying "peace," when the sword was already drawn. It is not fair to the perishing soul. It cheats him out of happiness and robs him of heaven at last. It is an awful thing to

lie to men, but it is infinitely pathetic to quiet a soul over the red flames of hell, when with a wild cry of alarm you might land him in the harbor of safety, and point him to a heavenly home. Let no man trifle with his brother. The issues of life and of death are of transcendental importance. They are infinite. The soul will live forever in heaven or in hell. Let us deal honestly with it. Let us not mistake carnal satisfaction for spiritual safety.

Men are already drunk on the devil's narcotics. They have fallen into a most hazardous stupor. War is on, and death is just ahead—cry aloud—ring the alarm, fire! fire! that's the word—let it sound till the sleeper is aroused, and seeing his danger, flee for his very life. But there was our own Consul Prentiss, a noble man, no doubt, but among the most awful and lamentable things I ever heard was the assurance given by the Consul to his wife. They were painfully pathetic, "My husband assures me that there is no immediate danger and when there is the least particle of danger we will leave the place." Not long after the Consul, his wife, and two lovely children perished in the fire. Thousand of sinners feel in their hearts that there is danger ahead. Some time there is a sense of uneasiness—restlessness, and a half resolution to flee to a safer place, but some one whispers Mt. Pelee has not sent out enough ashes yet; let the flames get redder, let the fire shoot higher, when the thunders are louder and the molten lava begins to run down the mountain sides it is time enough. So men and women watch the volcanic eruptions of sin, they admire from a distance the looming mountains, as did Mrs. Prentiss and little Christine, from their back windows, four miles away, admire the grand and awful spec-

tacle of flaming Mt. Pelee. Souls are sleeping around the black crater of sin. They have caught a whiff of the sulphurous flames and drawn back a bit, but no danger yet. They know they will have to flee some day. They know the black stream of death is coming. They know the awful tragedy will break somewhere, some time, but not now. So they hope and wait and linger over the pitfall of death, till somebody cries, "The mountain is on fire—the city is burning up." Then it is too late to flee. Every escape is cut off—nothing remains but doom.

On Scotland's shore, where a tall bluff runs up very rugged and almost perpendicular, walked a man very leisurely one day; the tide there was most treacherous—hazardous in the extreme. As the man walked to and fro along the pebbly beach there appeared a man on the rocks above, who, seeing the fellow below, cried aloud, "This is a dangerous tide and it will soon be coming in; leave the beach." To this speech the stroller replied, "I know all about the tide," and so continued to stroll. The man on the rocks cried again, "The tide is coming—man, flee, flee for your life." He was laughed to scorn; the mocking "ha!" "ha!" rang out over the beating wave. At last he saw the danger; the black angry waves came dashing on; rising higher and higher and the mountain pass was cut off, and the poor fellow was doomed. He clutched the rock and cried for help—but it was too late.

Just then the surging sea rolled over him and he dropped with a wail into the depths. Sinner, wait no longer—delay is dangerous. One night, one hour may cost you your life. The black waters of His

wrath are surging all around you. The sea is angry; the tide is rolling high, and you must haste—flee for your life—find the mountain pass, it is plain and accessible to-night; you'll find it by the cross—you'll know it by the blood. Wait and your hopes will perish—wait and doom comes sure and soon.

Mt. Pelee of sin is belching forth destruction. The red flames are leaping. The fine hot ashes like rain are falling. The sulphur of death has filled the air. Mt. Calvary thank God, is not far away; come to Calvary and so escape the doom of this flaming mount. The sea of God's love is before you. The ship of Zion is anchored there. Put out to sea; delay not a moment and so be forever safe from this rain of fire.

BIBLE PROMISE.

“For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.”

Waiting for the Lord.

I waited patiently for the Lord.—Ps. 40: 1.

Patience is more oft the exercise
Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,
Making them each his own deliverer,
And victor over all
That tyranny or fortune can inflict.

—*Milton.*

Patience ; accomplish thy labor ; accomplish thy work of affection !
Sorrow and silence are strong, and patient endurance is godlike.
Therefore accomplish thy labor of love, till the heart is made god-
like,

Purified, strengthened, perfected, and rendered more worthy of
heaven.

—*Longfellow.*

II.

David had been in a low state, in some physical distemper or mental anguish or soul despondency. He evidently was in great distress and felt himself sinking away from God, but he dare not trust to himself, nor be in undue haste. He must patiently wait for God. He could afford to wait. No man can afford to rush away from God. No one is warranted, it matters not how urgent his need be, or how desperately he may chafe under trial, in leaving his post till his Lord shall come. So in all our distresses and afflictions and bitterest trials, we will be wise to copy the Psalmist's example and wait for the Lord. No fretting, no worrying, no human device or wisdom can take the place of this patient waiting for God.

God may seem slow, but He is not so slow as you. He is only waiting to be gracious. He would be entreated. You have some how called Him. In some sort of a way you have muttered out a prayer, but are you really trusting Him? Do you trust your Lord however long He may tarry? If he does not come right early you may believe He finds in you an unwillingness, an unreadiness to receive Him; or it may be that it is for His own glory that He tarries so long. His long tarrying may make your salvation all the more remarkable, and if you are a Christian His protracted absence may make Him all the dearer when He comes, and at the same time school you in the sweetest virtue—Christian patience. Think it not a strange thing nor hard if the Almighty fly not to your side in a moment.

After all God is God, and in His own mysterious way He will bring a far greater blessing to you, my child, than ever you had hoped for. Then, had you ever thought how the Almighty waited on you? How indifferent you were to Him? How you disregarded Him and slighted Him and did despite to the Holy Spirit? Many, O, so many times you promised and then broke your vows and postponed the day of your repenting. For five years God has waited on you; on some of you he has waited for ten years, on some for twenty-five. Some of you are old and gray and will soon be in your graves, and yet God is waiting still. How patient—O, the marvelous patience of God. Some years ago my sainted father and I stopped for the night at the home of a plain mountaineer up in White county. One of the sons of this old gentleman, our host, had long since left home, wandered away, never to come back. How tender, how pathetic, as the old gray-haired, sad-faced man told the story of his going away. Said the dear old father, "My boy is coming home to-morrow," and each day with pitiful, but hopeful speech the dear man would say, "my boy is coming home to-morrow." Something like that is the patience of Christ. He is waiting for sinners to come home. Tell me, friend, how long will you keep Him waiting? And ye sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, how long will you grieve your Father and try His patience with your negligence and disobedience? But who is a patient man? What do you mean by patience anyhow? There lies a fellow out in the graveyard flat of his back—his heart still, his lips sealed; would you call him a patient man? Yet he doesn't move a muscle, doesn't change expression, and hasn't since he has been a

citizen of that silent place. You would not say that he possessed any charms or grace at all. Certainly he would deserve no credit for not flying into a passion, nor for not at any time breaking the peace. No, a dead man knows nothing of patience, nor one under heavy narcotics.

The creature who has no life, no strength, who feels no restraint, who knows naught of suffering and care surely can know but little of that rare and beautiful flower which men call patience.

Then there must be back of Christian patience the heart-throb of real life, profound conviction, hope, sympathy, a loving restraint, a fellow feeling for another and sweet faith in God.

An impulsive spirit can be patient, a man of the meanest environments and of the sharpest cares.

How or in what may we wait patiently for God?

1. In sickness.

Some one has said that sickness is the greatest blessing in the world. Well, surely no one enjoys sickness. It is painful, distressing, hindering, oftentimes impoverishing. Ah, no, we do not enjoy that, but God only knows what good comes to us from this lowly source. A man on his back not infrequently sees more of heaven than he ever saw on his feet—catches fresher, sweeter, fuller glimpses of Jesus's face. The proud man on his feet is the humblest man on his back. The rough and sour spirit becomes the smooth and sweet. The unfeeling and irascible soul becomes the sympathetic and the patient. Sickness takes the starch out of a fellow, shows him his insignificance and his meanness, and develops the dear soul who ministers at his bedside. And through it all, by His own strange mercy,

the most Christ-like patience is cultivated. O, how Jesus does shine out in the sick-room, and how close He does come to our hearts when we commune on our beds. What else can we do, what better can we do than wait for God in the sick-room, for He is there.

The man in health who had no patience with wife or children or neighbor, but drove his business furiously without thought of prayer or patience, may be very quiet, very gentle on the bed. The impetuous, scolding mother learns beautiful lessons in the sick chamber, and takes as never before her little one to her heart. She has time for meditation, and patience grows sweetly there. How the sick-room cures the fretting, irritable child. Poor girl! Everything goes wrong—nothing pleases. Home is dull. Life is a burden. She sees no patch of blue, all clouded, but in His providence God lays her low. How changed now. Her rough temper has been smoothed out and she is patiently waiting for God.

2. In trial.

In all sorts of trials, from whatever source they spring, within or without, trials from good nature, trials from an ugly temper. In woods or on streets, alone or in crowds, whenever, however life's trials may assail we dare not forget our God, nor chafe under the load. Who can help lean on our Father when these sore trials rush upon us? To whom can you go then? No hand so soft as His. No arm so strong. If you will not wait for Him, you need not wait for another. But let us speak somewhat of special trial.

(1.) Church trials.

I have thought that people get madder, and say harder things against their friends about religion and politics than anything else.

This man is cross-grained, this one bitter, this one a gambler. The woman here is a tattler, the woman there—well, her life is not just right. Some members don't speak at all and some speak too much and there is uncleanness and selfishness and blasphemy in the ranks, and all things are going awry. How heavily do these evils press upon a sensitive, tender heart. Will these wrongs ever be set right? Who is sufficient for these things? God. Wait patiently and the rough places will be made smooth and the bitter cup will be sweetened.

My own soul has grown hot and restless under these cares, and I've been amazed, even angry at the sluggishness and stupidity of church life. I have wondered why God was so slow, why He did not make haste to come with sweet peace and set things moving in His name. Yes, in my soul's hot unrest and grinding anxiety I have almost doubted God. "And ye all have need of patience."

(2.) Business trials.

Far too many people rule God out of business. He will do for church matters—sentiments. You can talk to Him about predestination and free grace and the soul's salvation, but what is He to do with every-day affairs—with business? Why does the apple fall to the ground rather than shoot skyward? Did man fix that? Is it not God in the laws of gravitation? Why is it that the world in its marvelously rapid revolutions around the sun doesn't throw us precipitously into space? O, it is God in the law of force holding us back. God counts the hairs on your head and marks the sparrow's fall. He knows of the pearls of the sea and all the hidden treasures of the earth. From the tiniest blade of grass to the towering Alps; from a

drop of water to the thundering ocean; from the glow-worm to the blazing sun God reigns, God knows.

Think you that He who painted the cheek of the lily and gave plumage and songs to birds and hears the ravens when they cry, cares nothing for you, His mightiest creation, nor for your business, nor your struggles? No, no, my friend, think no longer our God is going out of business. His hands have shaped the channels of the sea, are guiding the stars in their courses and shaping the characters and destinies of nations, but nevertheless they are resting on you, holding you, my brother, in your business. Don't rule Him out. Don't forget Him. You'll need Him while the days are going by. You are not accumulating as fast as you thought one time to do. You had hoped to get rich, but somehow things don't go your way. You feel the disappointment keenly. You may now be tempted to take a near cut to wealth—to do a dishonest thing. Remember some things are better than gold—unsullied character, a restful conscience, the sweet presence of the Lord, all these are better.

Go slow. Wait. What you need most of all is to wait patiently for the Lord. He's coming. He sees the business when it is tottering. He knows your credit is strained. Hears the wild throb of your heart. Catches up those bitter sighs at night. Sees the tears as they steal down your cheek. Knows those half suicidal purposes. Stop! Wait, His great heart is touched by your infirmities. He feels for you in all your business trials. Business may totter, may fall, but your God will stand, and He stands for you. Then trust him. Wait patiently. Your soul will be the better and the happier for waiting.

(3.) Home trials.

What a great world is home. Here secrets may be told and kept. Here the tired man may come and rest and the dear little woman find peace and the children know the deepest love and protection. Birds sing the sweetest at home and the skies overhead are the bluest, and here we catch the finest visions. But home is not always so sunny. Even the happiest home has its dark days. Sometimes the sun hides behind the clouds; sometimes the tear-drop falls; sometimes hearts are breaking. It often follows that where love is the strongest grief is the keenest, and darkness is more black in contrast with the brightest light. The tempter comes and heart happiness begins slowly to ooze out. The Old Bible is not quite so dear. The family altar has been neglected. Business reverses or success may drive out God. Flushed or depressed with this life the soul may forget to wait for its Lord.

Maybe your boy has gone out from home and is pressing the dark paths of sin. He has been gone so long. He has fallen so low, you have been waiting all these months and years half hoping, but your heart is breaking. You cry, "Will he ever come back?" God only knows. Wait for Him.

Maybe your daughter, on whom you had built your hopes, so fair, so beautiful and once so good, has brought at last crimson to your cheek, and an aching into your heart. You hang your harp upon the willow tree. How can you sing any more? Wait, wait, God can cure the deepest wounds. He can even mend heart strings. The music may not be so loud, but it will be far sweeter, if sadder. Wait patiently for God and when he shall come He will mend

those broken heart strings, and when He shall sweep His fingers across them they shall send forth melodies almost divine. Wait, wait. Your children will not always behave like angels and your wife will not always be as sweet as when you led her to the altar, and your husband, poor fellow, if he could have fallen from grace he would have tumbled long time ago. As it is God knows he has brought you enough trouble. Yes, sometimes there are glances that flash fire and harsh angry words, and alas, the cudgel when the drunkard comes home. It is enough to break your spirit. Surely you could not endure all this but for divine help. Never give up. "Let patience have her perfect work." Trust in God. Wait for Him and He will bring thy wayward children home and give them a sweeter peace and drive the darkness out and shoot sunshine in every heart and set all the birds a-singing. The loud laughter, the pattering feet, the wildest disagreement and a thousand questions through the day will not put your nerves on the rack and make you fret and worry when Jesus comes.

Bear with the little ones. Don't fly into a passion because of every noise. Be good to them. O, be so patient. For some day the little feet will resound no longer in the hall and their little lips will ask no more questions. No more will the little darling fall and come to Mamma to be kissed. No more will the baby come to you and say "I'm sleepy." Their little feet and hands will be still out yonder and they will not come home any more. Ah! then you would give a world like this for the baby to rock, for some little darling to hug to your bosom, for the little noisy feet to patter down the hall. Be patient with the children—

be patient with the home "folks." They are here to-day, but God alone knows where they will be to-morrow. Wait for God. For you won't have to wait for Him long after all. Your vigils are growing fewer. The goal is almost in sight. The night of sorrow is passing. Your spirit longs for its freedom and its God.

Many years ago a father, with his little son twelve years old, left a town in Pennsylvania to visit New York. They kissed the home "folks" good-bye, hoping soon to return. They reached the great city and stopped at one of the great hotels. When morning came the father said to the son, "I am going out for a little early shopping. When you are dressed and ready go down and wait for me at the office and then we'll go to breakfast." The boy waited and the hours dragged by, but father didn't return. Search was made, but no discovery. It was thought the father was robbed and murdered. The little fellow was wild with grief, and turned at last mournfully for home. It was a great shadow on that home, but to her dying day the mother kept looking for the absent husband, but he never came home. Not so with our Lord. No evil can befall Him since He broke the bands of death.

Weary soul, waiting soul, keep up your courage; it won't be long. The night is far spent and over the hill-tops may be seen the flashings of immortal light. Tip-toe and catch a rapturous vision of your Lord. He is coming—the King of Glory—the Redeemer. Soon the shouts of heavenly hosts shall be heard and every blood-washed sinner shall go home. There all tears shall be washed away and all waiting shall be ended.

God's Manifest Presence a Guarantee Against Fear.

I will fear no evil for thou art with me.—Ps. 23 : 4.

My Father! see
I trust the faithfulness displayed of old,
I trust the love that never can grow cold—
I trust in thee.

—*Christian Intelligence.*

Be not so much discouraged in the sight of what is yet to be done, as comforted in His good will towards thee. 'Tis true He hath chastened thee with rod and sore afflictions; but did He ever take away His loving kindness from thee? or did His faithfulness fail in the sorest, blackest, thickest, darkest night that ever befell thee?—*I. Pennington.*

III.

The Psalmist, with perfect confidence in his guide, with a long and delightful experience with the shepherd of his soul, breaks forth in song, "I will fear no evil." Now, by the help of the Holy Spirit, I will give you the ground of his confidence and joy, and not only this, but that also of every soul that has been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Men are cowards.

In a broad and significant sense this is true. This is a humiliating confession for man to make; it stings his pride; it brands him as unworthy the confidence of brave spirits. He does not like to entertain such thoughts. The very thought brings shame. Man is a proud creature; he prefers the admiration to the scorn of his fellow-beings, of course. He would be thought of at his best, and not at his worst, so he seeks to hide this vice, for a cowardly world hates cowardice. But as long as there are sons and daughters of Adam on the earth, fear, yes, cowardice, will prevail. It is a weakness of the human family. It is a vice inherent to the carnal nature, and flourishes most in an unwashed heart. I doubt not David himself was a great coward before he met in spirit the Heavenly Shepherd. Notwithstanding he dared to face bears and lions and tear them asunder, and in an uneven match slew the chief of the Phillistines, yet did he tremble at the tread of Saul, and was often in flight for his life. When Nathan thundered at David with the charge, "Thou art the man!" the king was afraid. His bravery melted into cowardice.

Man is a coward because he is self-centered.

All self-centered men are cowardly. No man can be brave whose self is his hope, his shrine, his god. To be self-centered is to eliminate God from one's affections, yea, from his very thoughts. His fellow-men also are neglected—indeed, they are often despicable—very pigmies in his sight. He sees nothing good nor great in others, cares naught for them, only as he can make them serve his selfish purposes. They are rubbish in his sight, to be cast aside, or else blocks or stones over which he hopes to pass up to his pride and self-idolatry.

Ah, the poor little creature that shuts himself up in his own little world with never a man nor moon nor star to shine, save in his own narrow circle, is small indeed, and certainly is to be pitied. Such a being knows not the meaning of courage. He is too much in love with his own shriveled life to risk anything for God or man. The more precious a man's life is to himself, the more self-centered he is, the more cowardly. God deliver us from such, and for these give us men!

Man is cowardly because he sees a dreadful foe in death.

He knows death is the goal toward which all paths earthly lead. He knows that once death's grimy hands feel for the cords of life there can be no backing down, no pity shown, no release from man's last enemy. Death humbles the proud, destroys all distinction, lays the prince and pauper down in the common dust. Death is no respecter of persons, and sooner or later its fatal shafts will stick in every heart. Then the grave and the beyond—the untried realities of eternity. What then? What then? Who but the bravest can walk intrepid to the black water's edge? Who but the stoutest soul can face without a tremor life's last flood?

“How shocking must thy summons be, O, death,
To him that is at ease in his possessions;
Who counting on long years of pleasure here,
Is quite unfurnished for that world to come!

What a contrast to Pope's “Dying Christian to His Soul.”

“The world recedes; it disappears!
Heaven opens to my eyes, my ears
With sounds seraphic ring;
Lend, lend your wings! I mount! I fly!”

Oh, may every one in this presence meet death thus!
What peace must come to a scene like this. What sunshine
to light the portals that give exit to the soul departing.

Man is a coward because of sin.

After all it is sin that brings sorrow to the human heart,
that makes men tremble when they walk under great
shadows. Sin makes cowards of us all. It plants our
pillows with thorns, crowds the sick-room with lions and
adders, wings death with scorpions and fills the grave with
the blackness and horrors of hell. Sin is man's bitterest
foe, and as he begins to realize it, as he must in time, what
agony to his dying.

Mastered by sin, manacled by sin, what soul is there that
does not quake at the thought of the now and forever?

A poor fellow as he lay dying cried out: “I don't want
to die; I'm afraid.” In vain did his friends try to quiet
his fears, but he cried the more: “I'm afraid! my sins!
my sins!” And in the anguish of his soul he passed out
into the dread eternity.

SOME NOTES.

NOTE 1.—Men are often brave in war.

The inspiring strains of martial music set the soldier's nerves a-tingling. There is an uplift in the brass band. One might pass your door at this moment and how it would stir your hearts. The martial music, the blazing campfire, the shouts of men, the din of battle, all arouses the wildest enthusiasm—not infrequently drives to desperation.

Men may be cowards at home, blanch at the creaking of a door or tremble at the falling of the shadows, yet will bear the breast to shot and shell or stand intrepid before the belching cannon, but let the campfires die out, let the band be silent, let the clatter of bayonets, the roar of guns, the din of battle he heard no more—and then—and then.

NOTE 2.—Men are often brave when in rage.

In his normal state a child may put him to flight, but when stirred with anger he ventures where angels dare not tread. He is over-balanced, he is wild, he is desperate. Nothing daunts him, nothing turns him. He is like a raging beast, like crackling fire, knows nothing but destruction. Oh, he is brave, but where is reason? He is not himself. Just let the fires of passion burn to the palor of ashes and then an awful and painful cowardice ensues.

NOTE 3.—Men are often brave when inflamed with rum.

Some of the most timid, some of the most shrinking, some of the most gentle characters I have ever known have become as unchained hyenas under the influence of strong drink. With a cool brain he had studiously avoided danger. He was afraid. But he is acting strangely now. He talks loudly, he boasts, he swears, insults his best friends, he is irritable, he swaggers and staggers, his eyes

flash fire, his cheeks burn red, his words cut like knives. What means all this? Strong drink? Strong drink will drive a man to the knife, to the pistol, to the black waters. It will dash the coward from the cliff to the yawning chasm below. Inflamed with rum the loving husband will stagger home at night and brain the dear little woman he swore to always defend. Crazed by liquor the adoring father creeps stealthily to the bed, with fiendish eye looks on the little one sleeping—glares, gloats, lifts his hands with a yell of hellish pleasure and plunges the dagger into his darling's heart. This is brave. But it is the rousing of a demon. But such bravery does not protect, nor does it give any comfort. It is false, it is dangerous, it is damning.

The best guarantee against fear and against evil is the presence of Christ.

Now who can afford to be without the best, and who can be satisfied with less than the best? Can less than the best support you in life's deep shadows? And when you come to death's sullen stream who but Jesus can drive back the breakers and keep the flood from overwhelming you? Who but Jesus can give quiet to the heart?

How terrific sometimes is one's loneliness. One instinctively shudders at the approaching shadows. The child is afraid to be alone. All humanity craves for companionship. A stranger not infrequently frightens a child and darkness makes it cry out. Oh, the fear, the real heart anguish that comes to one as he feels a deep sense of his insecurity.

A small girl tries to sleep as she lies on her bed in the dark; she rolls from side to side, sighs heavily, starts with

fright, and cries out, "I can't sleep." And the mother says, "What is the matter with my little daughter? Why can't she sleep to-night?" And the child replies, "I am afraid of the dark. Come here, mamma, I won't be afraid any more." In the mother's presence the child did not fear the dark, but went smiling into sleep. So if Christ be with us in the world's dark places we will not be afraid, for there is nothing to harm us in the presence of Jesus, for there is always safety and comfort where Jesus is.

(a) Jesus' presence in temporal disasters.

Calamities befall men everywhere—no man, no community, no nation enjoys an immunity from misfortunes. Trials, heartaches, losses, these are the common heritages of humanity. They follow always in the wake of the world's march to the judgment.

There is the shrinkage of bonds, the instability of securities, the fluctuation of the market; then there is loss by fire and loss by water, and loss by cyclone, loss by earthquake, and losses by many agencies, but no man need have a broken heart nor be afraid at such losses. David said, "For Thou art with me." Paul said, "None of these things move me."

Many a Christian merchant and professional man and needle-woman and shop-girl and farmer have seen all their possessions taken by wind or wave or flame or thief and never murmured, but praised God. Why this beautiful resignation, this calmness of spirit? My friends, it was the presence of Christ. No one can rush out of his house into the street and watch the hungry flames eat up his home with all his valuables and every dear old heirloom and praise God, unless Christ is with him. The saint may be

homeless here, but Jesus has prepared him a mansion in glory. Why should he be afraid? Homes may crumble, fields may wash away, merchandise may be consumed, all prospects terrestrial may banish forever, but Christ is near you, dear soul, and is opening for you visions celestial. He holds you and leads you on through the dark. Hear Him as He speaks to you, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

A poor old woman lay dying in the alms-house. She had no home, no friends. Some one came in to pity her and to comfort her, but pointing up to the far off skies she cried out joyously, "From the poor-house to the mansion." And then went home. She was not afraid, Christ was with her.

(b). Jesus' presence in the loss of loved ones.

And here is where we specially need Jesus. What a trial to sit in the sick-room and see the darkness slowly fall and the black tide slowly rise. The fast breathing, the flushed cheek, the wild glare in the eye, the bead on the brow, all point to the last hour. Soon the farewells must be said; soon the loved form must be lowered out of sight. In this dark hour, with these wild breakers of death what arms can support like these of Christ? What voice can pity, what cordial revive, what presence can make glad even the still chamber of death, but Jesus? To the one leaning on the everlasting arms there is quiet. A sweet calm comes into the heart of him who lays his head on the Shepherd's bosom. Did not Jesus speak to the wild winds and waves and did they not obey Him? Did He not rescue Peter from the flood and quiet his fears? He says: "It is I, be not afraid." Though compassed by death and the

grave, let there go up a cry from the heart of every blood-washed sinner sitting in the dark, it may be alone with his dead, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." It is a good battle cry. It is a sure weapon of defence. It is the mighty slogan in life's campaign. Let the sheep walk close to the shepherd.

There can be no danger lying at His feet.

I visited the home of a gentleman in this city, not many days ago, and as I sat in the parlor my soul was deeply moved at the wailing of the poor broken-hearted father. In the back room lay a beautiful child, rosy-cheeked, blue eyed, golden-haired. She was burning up with fever. She was dying. Her father worshipped her, but he was an unbeliever, he was a blasphemer. His piteous cries would have broken your heart. He said, "I want to go down to the grave with her, I want to hold her in my arms till the judgment. I may not be prepared to meet God, but I can be with her that long." And then he broke down and sobbed. In vain did I try to comfort him. The poor man's need was Jesus. He could not say, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

I pity the man who tries to beat back life's flood with his own hands—yea, my heart yearns with the deepest solicitude for the poor fellow who with his own little torch, is seeking to find his own way through the impenetrable darkness of death.

Large hearted friends may take you in their arms, the sweetest voice may sing to your sorrow, the gentlest hands may touch the bleeding wounds, but the heart will still feel a bitterness and mourn the loss without the magic touch of the Son of God. I visited another home and how

different. Here lay a young mother all still and cold in death. Beautiful in life, still beautiful in death. Just before the parting breath she had sung, "Asleep in Jesus" and "Saw the Gates Ajar," and then swept through them with a smile upon her face. Her mother, too, was supported by Divine grace, and though the big tears rolled down her cheeks, she praised God as she thought on the triumph over death. Jesus was in the room. His presence was her support.

(c) His presence in the last hours.

Men may do or imagine they do pretty well without Jesus on a sunny day. They are not afraid of the sunshine, but they do grow a bit afraid when the dark days come on. The hill-tops are flattering. They offer security and comfort, but as one begins to step down into the vale where the dews lie thick upon the grasses and the shadowy forms stalk around, he feels a strange sense of uneasiness.

It is said that time and place often make timid men bold, but time and place often make bold men afraid.

An infidel and a very pious bishop sat one day on the deck of a great ship discussing things eternal. The infidel scoffed at the bishop's faith. Presently there arose a storm at sea; the great wind howled and the sea rolled and the black waves beat furiously upon the ship, and the infidel was swept into the seething waters. Whereupon he began to cry for mercy and call upon the bishop to plead with God for his poor lost soul. The bishop taunted him, saying, "I thought you did not believe in God." The miserable wretch replied, "It makes all the difference in being on the deck and in the deep waters."

The prince and the pauper must lie down together. The

proud and the humble must come to the same dust. The hater of God will sooner or later yield his weapons. No carnal bravery, no earthly equipment can brook the channel that separates between the shores.

Mr. Geile tells a very pathetic story. He said as he was traveling in the far east he met, one night on the beautiful Switzerland mountain, a most interesting gentleman, a lawyer of great renown, and as they stood leaning against a great rock, they began to speak of the white stars that shine so lustrously in the east. And the stars spoke of God and eternity. The lawyer with a far-off dreamy expression on his face, and a tenderness in his voice, spoke of a death-bed scene that occurred in his own home years ago. Said he: "I once stood by the bedside of my daughter, just twenty years old. Her form was very thin, her face was white. She was not long for this world. She looked up into my hard face, (for I was not a believer), and said, "kiss me, papa." I kissed her. I was so bitter. I almost worshiped her and death was robbing me. She said, "Kiss me again, papa." I kissed her—this time more tenderly—my heart was breaking. As I stood looking on her wasted but radiant face she threw up her hands and said, "Lord Jesus, take me now," and her spirit took its flight. Sir, by the help of God I shall meet her beyond those white stars." And his voice trembled and his eyes filled with tears. I beseech you, friends, to make friends with Jesus—throw yourself on His mercy, abide in His presence. Oh, take no other, you need him now, but can you pass through the black waters unless Jesus goes with you and hold you up?

BIBLE PROMISE.

“He shall call upon me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.”

Halting at the Red Sea.

And the Lord said unto Moses, wherefore crieth thou unto me ?
Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.—Ex. 4:14.

Be trustful, be steadfast, whatever betide thee,
Only one thing do thou ask of the Lord
Grace to go forward wherever He guide thee,
Simply believing the truth of His word.

—*Anon.*

The soul ceases to weary itself with planning and foreseeing,
giving itself up to God's Holy Spirit within, and to the teaching
of His Providence without. * * * * *

He is not forever fretting at his progress, or looking back to see
how far he is getting on, and makes all the more progress because
it is unconscious. So he never gets troubled and discouraged ; if
he falls he humbles himself, but gets up at once and faces on with
renewed earnestness.—*Jean Nicolas Grou.*

IV.

The Israelites were standing on the banks of the Red Sea, about 3,000,000 strong. Pharaoh and his army were pressing hard upon them. The almost impenetrable wilderness was all about them, while the unbridged and unvesselled sea rolled before them. To stand still was to die, to turn to either side was to perish in the wilderness, to turn back was to fall in the hands of the irate and merciless Egyptians, and to go forward seemed a movement born of desperation, for the wild sea plunged at their feet. What can they do; what must they do, with every avenue of escape closed to them?

Somehow they forgot their marvelous preservation as a nation during the centuries and those terrific miracles—God's mighty manifestation of mercy to them. His slaying of all the first born in Egypt, His loving deliverance of them at the passover. Where was their gratitude, and where was their faith? How soon we forget Him and His preserving grace. "And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them and they were sore afraid: and the children cried out unto the Lord.

"And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness." Ex. 14: 10, 12, 11.

They doubted God and chided Moses. But how strong was Moses just now as he trusted in the Almighty. See his stalwart faith. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever.

"The Lord shall fight for you and ye shall hold your peace." Ex. 14:13, 14.

But we find Moses now in the depths. How quickly has he fallen. So strong then, so weak now. Comforting his fellow country men now, now begging comfort for himself. History repeats itself. It has ever been so. And we are doing to-day as Moses did. Our faith is so bright and our hope so sweet we don't see how we can ever doubt Him, but soon, so very soon, the lights are out and we are trembling in the dark.

The Israelites may have threatened the life of Moses. Certainly they were in a desperate attitude. Or Moses might have seen the glittering chariots and the spirited chargers of the enemy. At any rate, he was greatly troubled now and was at prayer. The Israelites were longing for their onions and garlic and the flesh pots of Egypt. Alas! too many church folks have the taste of these same vegetables in their spiritual mouths, their hearts are yet in Egypt, but Moses longed to be rid of his enemies. He was talking to his Lord. But is it not true that the children are too much on their knees? Prayer is an essential element in the Christian life. He needs to be much in prayer, but he can be too much. Talk to God. Ask Him for what you want. Trust Him for an

answer and get up and go and do whatsoever your hands find to do. The Lord was not harsh with His servant. He was not unkind, but He did lovingly chide him. Moses was spiritually bewildered, stupid. Was asking for the things he already possessed. He had the promise and assurance of deliverance. Had just a little while ago confidently spoken to the anxious hosts. God would not have him lose any time. He speaks to arouse him from his spiritual stupor. What is needed now is not prayer, but a commanding of the Israelites and the striking of the Red Sea. Marching is often better than kneeling or standing about the altar. When people's lives are in danger you need works as well as prayers.

Imagine the ludicrous picture of a boy asking his mother for bread when he holds in his hands a great chunk, eating gluttinously, or a child asking for water when he holds to his lips a pitcher of water.

But there is another picture. Your house is on fire. Your children are on the inside, their lives in constant danger. What will you do? Kneel before the kindling flames till all be consumed, or will you dash into the burning building and save your children? The answer is obvious.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, wherefore crieth thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." O let us trust God and go forward. Too many of our churches are doubting and halting and saying prayers when they ought to be marching. There are mountains to scale and seas to cross and tides to stem. Let us be up and off.

Christians need to go forward.

1st. In faith.

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him." And with little faith you can't please him much. Out of your heart cry "Lord increase my faith." Say it brother, sister; say it now and go forward trusting in God.

There are problems too hard for you to solve. There are difficulties you can never surmount. There is one way. Trust in God.

A teacher, trying one day to impress the lesson of faith upon a class of little boys, took a penny out of his pocket and said, "John, come here and get the penny." The little fellow said, "hem, hem," just grunted and looked wistfully. The teacher then said, "James, come and get the penny." James looked longingly at the money and grunted, and like John, he never came. The proposition went on down the line, all refusing, all doubting till the last boy was reached. "Here, Henry, is a penny, come and it is yours." Whereat Henry stepped quickly forward and said "gimme, gimme," reaching out his little hand for the penny. Dear soul, have you great sorrows? Have you trials that press you sore? Have you afflictions and temptations? Have you bereavements that make your heart ache? Is your home so dark, so dreary now with your children lying out yonder in their graves? Well, God knows all your losses and your griefs. Trust Him.

O, you say "life is so hard, the road is so dark. I can not see my way out." Well, better than that, God can. But you say "my path leads me to the wall without gate or opening. I am shut in." All for the best. Leave it, child, with God; your detention will be for your good if shut in with Him for awhile. You can only get your faith strengthened. And after all, God will shut no door

against you, which you ought to pass through. Then look up, ye disconsolate, ye broken-hearted. Trust Him and move on.

2d. We ought to go forward in personal efforts. Under God we can not make too much of personal efforts. If this old world is ever brought to the feet of Christ it will not be done by angels or armies or the spirit of the just men made perfect, but by personal efforts of men and women on earth.

Things are intensely personal down here. We can not deny the charge. Our eating is personal, our sleeping is personal, our waking is personal, our joys and sorrows are personal. A man can not praise God for another or blaspheme His holy name. He must either go to heaven for himself or to hell. Men are exerting their personal efforts every day for good and bad. Oh, how the world needs your personal efforts, my friend, for its emancipation and uplifting. No other man can take your place in this life. Every one must fill his own place. If your efforts are suspended, if your life is wasted here, no soul can make up the loss, neither in time nor eternity. But let man's zeal be according to knowledge. There is time to speak, certainly there is time to tell men about their soul's salvation; but what would you think of a fellow crying out to a man running to catch a train, "hold on there, I want to talk to you about your soul. Are you prepared to die?" A woman has fallen overboard and is now struggling for her life. Shall I give out a hymn and take a text and preach a sermon warning the drowning woman to flee the wrath to come? If I did you would call me a fool. No, I'll plunge in, lay hold of her and save her from drowning. Wouldn't you?

A poor foolish fellow was just chafing to help on the kingdom, so he secured a lot of religious tracts to distribute. The first soul he met on the street was a one-legged soldier, to whom he promptly gave a tract on dancing. Some "folks" ought to "go way back and sit down." Watch for opportunities, study human characters. Seek the wisdom of God. Have a passion for souls. Lose not a moment. Strike while the iron is hot, but make no speed, put forth no effort that would drive the soul beyond your reach. It is a sanctified art, it is an incomparable attainment to be able to lead lost souls to Jesus.

Be in haste, but never get in a flurry. It takes time, it takes religion, it takes sense to save people.

A minister was once urging his congregation to more piety, to stronger religious activities. So eloquent, so importunate was his appeal, that a gentleman sitting near the stand leaped to his feet, rushed down the aisle with open Bible in hand. He was wild. He met a sad-faced stranger near the door. He stopped suddenly, caught hold of him and said, almost screaming: "You want to go to heaven, sir, you want to go to heaven?" The poor man was frightened almost out of his life. When he could speak he said, "No, no, no." "Well, go to hell," said the Bible man, and then marched deliberately back to his seat.

Just such cranks as this fellow are bringing religion into disrepute and putting the heavenly manna beyond the reach of the starving.

I tell you, men and women, it is good to expell ignorance and superstition; it is blessed to provide for widows and orphans; it is beautiful to dry tears of the mourner and speak some tender words to the broken-hearted. Yes, you

do well to lift up a very high standard of morals in the community, but the greatest work on earth is to save souls from death. Then engage in the highest service and wait not for another. Why shoot at sparrows when you can kill lions?

One night at the Houston factory, I was preaching on the Love of God. The sermon was over, the door of the church was open, and several came forward. Among the converts was a tall, beautiful young woman. The tears were running down her cheeks. The pastor asked her for her Christian experience. She said: "To-night, while the preacher was talking on the blood of Jesus, I felt my sins roll away." And her face was radiant. I wept for joy. I couldn't help it. Go out, then, and bring in the lost. You can do no better thing this side of heaven. Next to your own salvation is the salvation of the soul in which God has used you.

3d. We ought to go forward in sympathy.

Sympathy cannot dwell richly in a selfish heart. He who is wrapped up in himself logically excludes all others. No soul can reach a high round in the spiritual ladder who does not reach it through other hearts. The man who lives closest to the earth is he who shuts his heart against the cries of his brother. For one's own spiritual advancement, for his happiness and usefulness he must enlarge in sympathy. He owes it to himself, therefore, to cultivate this heavenly flower.

No wonder men and women are so sour and crabbed. They live so far from other people. The church is on stilts above the world, and the saint too much turns his back upon the sinner. Let us who love the Lord turn quickly

to the fallen and give him a brother's hand. Perhaps he has heard no kind word to-day, nor seen a friendly face. One honest smile might wake a heaven in his soul, and loving, sympathetic arms could lift him to the rapturous embrace of Jesus.

Delay no longer in giving this sympathy to the sorrowful. Already it has been withheld till the poor heart is starving.

A story is told of a drunken Irishman. One day the Irishman staggering along, came to a ditch. Standing on the edge he looked down and saw his friend dead drunk at the bottom. Gazing for a moment on the unfortunate fellow he said: "Pat, in faith, I can't get you out, but I can get down there with you."

Men are down in the world, some very low, some at the bottom, in the blackest slums. Get down with them. One sympathetic touch of your hand may revive them. One warm heart throb of yours beating against the dead heart of your submerged brother, may kindle again the liveliest hope.

A poor scarlet woman, dead to home and to virtue, a roaming outcast, was arrested one day on the streets for some crime. The officers took her to prison, there to await her trial. The dungeon door had hardly shut her in when a handsomely dressed woman, a very angel on earth, appeared. She asked the keeper if she might see the poor creature. The door was opened and she entered. There sat the outcast with disheveled hair and splotched face and soiled dress, looking the very picture of despair. The fine lady walked up to her unfortunate sister, leant over and kissed her tenderly on the cheek. That kiss went

straight to her heart and broke it. The poor woman wept. Said it was the first kiss she'd had since her mother died. Look around you. There are plenty of unfortunates steeped in sin. They have gone very deep down in crime, but you know not their environments, nor their parentage, nor their peculiar weaknesses and temptations. They are waiting for your help and loving sympathy. A smile, a tear, a warm hand-grasp may be your angels to open the door of heaven for your brother and sister in sin. Then send them on their blessed mission.

4th. Finally go forward in sacrifice.

I fear most of us have not gotten further than the alphabet of this language. It is a dear language and is so hard to learn. O, that we might master it all, at least, get a working vocabulary. How the few celebrities in this strange, sweet doctrine revel in it. They say it is delightful to the soul. My friend, let us strive after this joy, the rare joy of sacrifice.

If we did not love self so much we'd have more love for others. If we loved others better we'd find the royal road of sacrifice. Great love knows great sacrifices.

A true husband will give all he has and all he is for his wife. The mother will lay down her life for her child. Yes, friend will die for friend, but matchless love was that of Christ. He died for his enemies. No such death could have been provoked, but for the unspeakable love of God.

Sacrifice! sacrifice! Who can know its meaning? Who can fathom its depths? Who can scale its heights? Who can sail its boundless sea? Oh, talk not so boastfully, say not what you have done when you have given up nothing, suffered nothing, lost nothing, when three bountiful meals

a day are yours and a clever wardrobe always. When a penny goes to the heathen and a dollar for your luxuries, a crumb to the orphans and a plum pudding for your own dinner, a rag for the beggar and a silk for the gratification of your pride. Give God no longer your refuse, your miserable leavings, but pour bountifully into His treasury. Go forward. Go forward in real sacrifice. Give up. Live without. Learn the meaning.

A precious little girl took up her mother's hands one day in her own chubby hands and said, "mamma what makes your hands so ugly and black?" The poor mother's hands were all blackened and twisted. She gently put her child away and said, "not now, my child, but mamma will tell you some day." "Mamma, what makes your hands so black," the darling asked again in a few days. The little thing looked really distressed. Again the mother gently pushed her aside, saying, "Mamma cannot tell you now, so run along to play." But the child was troubled. She could not play, for the vision of those strange hands was ever before her. She came again with a resolution stamped upon her sweet face. Taking up her mother's hands once more she said "Come, mamma, tell me what makes your hands so black and ugly." There was the suspicion of tears in the mother's eyes, as she drew the child close to her side. "Well, it was this way, my darling: You were sitting in my lap one winter's night, when the fires were burning brightly on the hearthstone. You were so bright and happy that night, as you would look up and laugh in mother's face. It seemed I never loved my baby so much; but I don't know how it was, somehow you grew restless and all of a sudden you jumped out of my lap into

the fire. I leaped immediately into the fire after you, my child, and with a desperate effort succeeded in saving your life. That's why these hands are so black and ugly. It was because I loved my baby so."

Tears stood in the little girl's eyes as she raised her mother's hands to her lips, saying: "Your hands are not black and ugly any more, dear mamma; these are beautiful hands."

O, if you would see His beautiful hands, see them on Calvary, as He plunged into the fire, the fire of hate, the flames of hell, to snatch you and me from the everlasting burnings. Complain no more. Forever be dumb to murmurings and boastings, when you see heaven's best gift, your poor soul's dear sacrifice. Give all the gold of Ophar, all the diamond fields of Africa, all the pearls of the sea and all the worlds, and all these are but a leaf in the forest or a drop in the ocean.

Wait till God has done with this world. Wait till all the redeemed have come home; wait till we shall stand by His side on that cloudless day and hear Him tell with His own lips what a soul is worth; then may we know the full meaning of sacrifice.

Shut Doors.

And while they went to buy the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage; and the door was shut.—Matt. 25: 10.

Saddest of all words that ever fell on mortal ear, are those words of doom: "I know you not." The fellowship of the spirit which you have slighted could alone make you one with the joyous throng at the marriage feast. In that scene you cannot participate. Its light would fall on blinded eyes, its melodies upon deaf ears. Its love and joy could awake no chord of gladness in the world's benumbed heart. You are shut out from Heaven by your own unfitness for its companionship.—*Ellen G. White.*

V.

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Matt. 25:10.

This is a very strong and significant parable full of food for thought. Upon it we may meditate with the profoundest interest, and draw therefrom lessons of the deepest spiritual profit.

Some have made it teach Apostacy, but can this be a logical deduction? Let us note the clash between the inspired Matthew and the uninspired foolish virgins.

The Holy Spirit says, "They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them." But what did the foolish virgins say? And the foolish said unto the wise, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." Whose statement shall we believe—Matthew's—as the Spirit speaks through him, or the foolish virgin?

But whatever this parable teaches or does not teach, it certainly does speak of a shut door, and this means a *lost opportunity*.

Ordinarily, a door is used for a two-fold purpose, viz.: to shut in, and to shut out.

To the esthetical, a door may be admired for its artistic effects, but to the practical a door is valued for its utility.

The shut door is for the protection of those inside; the baffling, the confusion of those on the outside.

1. The door shut on the righteous—opposition to the truth. Sin has shut the door in many a good man's face.

The wicked have ever loved darkness and have, hence,

shut themselves up to the blackness of their folly and closed the doors to God's torch bearers who would bring them life.

The nations' doors were a long time closed, and remained closed to the advancing armies of peace until God's power was made manifest in their opening. The door was shut to Joseph for three years in the Egyptian prison, all on account of the malignity of a voluptuous queen. The door was shut on valiant Daniel, but the lions were as lambs that night, and the cruel door brought no harm to the trustful. The door was shut on the Hebrew children, and though the fires raged and the furnace glowed, the angel was there. That was enough. Old John Bunyan, faithful pilgrim, lay in Bedford jail for twelve years, but the door that shut him out from the world, shut him in with one of the sweetest visions of heaven.

The door shut on John at Patmos, but the raptures of the glory world filled his soul.

Paul, with his friend, lay in the filthy dungeon of Philippi, but at midnight they sang and the old jail trembled and the windows and doors flew open. Midnight songs will always break down the enemies doors.

In the early days of the church the saints were persecuted, whipped, scourged, mutilated, put to death, because they dared to preach the gospel and witness for Jesus. The door was shut, but God opened it and afterward turned an army of believers loose on the world to proclaim the everlasting truth.

In those dark, bloody days of the inquisition, men and women were hunted down like deer. Shot, imprisoned, starved, tortured, outraged, all because they loved the right and hated the wrong. Their cries of distress rent

the air; their bodies perished 'neath fire and sword; their bones bleached in filthy dungeons, but their sighs and tears and blood cried out against their persecutors, and God opened the door, and their faith and their children entered in.

Even in the last century, here in our own glorious America—in Georgia—Daniel Marshall, was arrested while on his knees, ruthlessly dragged away from prayer, and in the Carolinas and Virginia heralds of the cross were whipped for proclaiming the gospel. The door was shut.

But thanks be unto God, it has been opened since, and by his loving Providence will remain open 'till Jesus comes to bear the faithful to the skies.

2. Doors closed to God's people because they refuse to enter, or at best delay.

(1) There is the open door of kindly speech. The human heart is hungry for a word of promise and good cheer. Men and women are dying for the want of sympathy, for warm, tender affection. The world is cold and cruel. Its speech is cutting; its touch is blasting. But some heart is breaking, breaking for the consolation you have withheld so long. Too late now, the heart is still at last. Your words cannot reach that soul. The door is shut. I tell you the soul hungers as well as the body. A kind word, a cordial hand-grasp, a sympathetic glance goes a long way towards assuaging one's grief and letting the sunshine in.

How often have I seen little children looking so sad, their little hearts hungering for reconciliation, waiting for the smile and sweet word of forgiveness from mother.

A poor child sat one day by her mother's bedside. The

mother was dying but she told her darling that Jesus would send some one to care for her. At length the dear woman breathed her last, and some kindly hands laid her away. The poor, friendless, heart-broken child went out and lay all night on her mother's grave. The next morning some one coming that way saw the lonely orphan lying on her new strange bed. The stranger came near and asked why she lay there on the ground. She said it was her mother's grave and all the friend she had was dead. Continuing to talk she said: "Mother told me that Jesus would send some kind friend to care for me, and I am just waiting for him to come." The stranger was touched at this and said, "Well, Jesus has sent me; come with me." The little girl said, "Well, you've been a long time coming."

O, let us waste no time in bringing cheer to the lonely.

O, that God's people might be wise and Christ-like. The doors are open all about us. They are so many, so wide, so inviting. They are crying unto us. Let us enter with sweet and mellow speech that the disconsolate may smile again.

(2) There is the open door of blessed deed. Life is not all speech; though, alas, many go no further than profession. Talk is easy, many will stand in the open door of beautiful speech, saying: "I love you, be of good cheer, all will come right;" and lift not a hand to bear the burden or soothe the pain. What the poor soul needs now is not words, but deeds—deeds that will put meal in the barrel and oil in the cruse and coal in the grate and jackets on the little ones' backs, and shoes on their feet.

The invalid is lonely and hungry. The widow's bonnet is old and her dress is thin and faded. If you would be

an angel of mercy, open your purse now. Ah! what is that cry? The sufferer is passing. The door is shut. Within a stone's throw, right under the shadow of the great Delmonico Hall, in New York City, a poor woman strolled up and down the streets with a bundle of rags in her arms. In the rags was her poor, freezing, starving baby. A burly policeman stalked up and confronted her as in sorrow she stood upon the sidewalk. He turned back the rags, and lo, the baby was dead. Somehow they were provided for that night, the mother and her baby. The next morning the coroner's inquest was held over the child, the verdict was "starvation."

Think of it; in the magnificent Delmonico, which for three hours' pleasure was rented for the stupendous sum of \$40,000, where revelers, riotous, hillarious, while within the sound of their voluptuous voices out on the cold streets was a homeless, friendless mother nursing her starving baby.

Was ever there a more pathetic picture? Gold piled up here, just out yonder a starving child. Beneath the burning, glittering chandelier in Delmonico were the votaries of pleasure, but out in the darker streets a poor broken-hearted mother! God pity the poor and make haste to send them bread lest all the doors be shut.

3. There is the door of soul-saving. This is right. Is it not necessary to redeem and sustain the natural man? Then how transcendantly important it is to care for the soul. The body, at best, will perish and the cold ceremonies of death will wrap it about. But the soul! the soul! It must sing its great Redeemer's praise in heaven or wail forever in hell. The door is open now. The soul has its

longings. It is waiting for deferred help. Really, there is a welcome for you. You may enter in with your Savior. Through the open door you may capture a soul for a glorious eternity. You had thought to go. You had promised to go. Long ere this you had hoped to win your brother for Jesus. But why are you so slow? Why postpone this matter a single day? The days are going by, the opportunities are growing less, the door is slowly closing to.

I can never forget. It was a pitiful scene, full of pathos and of tears. A few years ago, in a certain town in Georgia, a young fellow lay mortally wounded. He was my friend, and I loved him. I had met him in another county. He was a wayward son. His poor old mother loved him, O, so tenderly, and begged me to pray for him. I did pray for him, God knows how fervently. But he seemed to grow harder; he took to drink and grew more dissipated, as the days passed by, 'till one day, in a hot dispute with one of his neighbors, he fell with a pistol ball crushing into his body—murdered. They took him up gently and bore him off to his home to meet his heart-broken young wife.

For days he lay upon his bed suffering and bleeding, his life hanging upon a thread. My heart went out in great pity for this poor fellow, but I was so busy I postponed my visit to his home. In my anxious soul I resolved to go. How his eternal interests did prey upon my mind. I was oppressed. I trembled at the thought of his death. I thought of his soul and heaven. I thought of his soul and hell. I wondered if my friend was prepared to die. But I never saw him again in life. I lost my opportunity. God knows my heart has ached enough since then. Ah,

my friend, the ghost of that murdered man haunts me still. Heaven spare you such a pang, but haste or the door will be shut.

It is sunrise, or sunset; midday or midnight. A cry of intolerable anguish is heard; you rush upon the threshold; you would tell the old, old story, but a ruined soul has passed into eternity. The door is shut.

3. The open door to sinners.

These are days of grace, of wondrous mercy. Often, O, so often, has the sinner done despite to the Holy Spirit. He has trampled on God's blessed favors. In his heart he hated his Maker and cared not for the Christ of Calvary, but all the while God has mercifully kept open the door.

The sinner lies and steals, but the Master says, "Mercy yet." He murders and is covetous, but the door is still open. He blasphemes and breaks God's Holy Sabbath. He is drunken, vile, unclean, but still he may enter in. The door is open to all—the scarlet woman, the man in the slums, the devil's castaways. Nothing will shut the door but unbelief, and even with this, man's crowning infamy, God bears long.

For a long time God bore with Pharaoh and his hosts, but the sea closed in on them at last.

Many a long year, the wicked Antediluvians mocked God and laughed His servant to scorn, but the flood came and the cries of despair broke out on the waste of waters. The door was shut.

The rich young ruler had an open door. Christ stood before him and gave him the receipt for heaven. He heard it and sorrowfully went away. The door was shut.

Paul stood before King Agrippa pleading, eloquently

pleading Jesus. The door was open then, a golden opportunity, but like a fool, Agrippa lost it forever. The door was shut.

A poor drunken wretch lay upon a railroad track. In the distance the rumbling of wheels was heard and the shrill sound of a whistle. The drunken sleeper was partly aroused. "I'll get up in a minute—just a minute," and he settled down in slumber again. The great Mogul came thundering on round the curve, down the grade with a mighty train of cars. It was almost flying, the earth trembled beneath its ponderous weight. On it went, right on like a demon, rounding the curve—the great headlight glaring like some infernal monster—till crash, crash, crash, and all was still, and the sleeper lay a mangled corpse beneath the grinding wheels. So many a sinner to-day is sleeping before God's Mogul of wrath. Awake, awake, clear the track, the death-dealing engine is near at hand. A little more slumber and all is over. Now is your opportunity.

The great Mr. Whitfield was preaching one day on the text: "And the Door was Shut." In his audience were two very careless and flippant young men. They sat far back in the crowd. The speaker was speaking most eloquently on the theme, when one of the young men whispered to the other "well, suppose one door is shut, another will open." To be sure Mr. Whitfield heard not the whispered speech, but the Holy Spirit gave him a message, "Well," he thundered, "young man, if another door does open, it will be the door that will let you down into hell." Those young men blanched as if God, Himself, was speaking. The whole audience was moved. But I must bring

this talk to a close, and may the message burn into your hearts. Hear my brief conclusion. The bridegroom tarried, but He came at midnight. "And they that were ready, went in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut." To be shut out of heaven, to be shut in hell is agony unspeakable. "Hell is the wrath of God. His hate of sin." Flee from it, flee through the open door, which is Jesus. And when the door is shut, may you be shut in with Him.

The Desperation of a Sinner.

“Let us alone.”

But in all our lives, though time is given us to eat, drink, sleep, work and play, there is no moment given us to throw away.—
Anna Robertson Brown, Ph.D.

In times when vile men held the high places of the land, a roll of drums was employed to drown the martyrs' voices, lest the testimony of truth from the scaffold should reach the ears of the people—an illustration of how men deal with their own consciences and seek to put to silence the truth-telling voice of the Holy Spirit.—*Arnott.*

VI.

Yesterday, as I lay upon my cot taking an afternoon nap, I fell to dreaming. I stood before a great motly crowd preaching the everlasting gospel. Men and women sat in their seats with anxious faces, their bodies leaning forward toward the speaker, their eyes wildly distended, their mouths partly open. They presented so many pictures of distress. And, strange to relate, they were troubled because they thought that they would be forced to enter heaven. They cried out in the most pitiable tones, in real heart-wailings: "We don't want to go to heaven; O, don't torment us—just let us alone."

Had you never heard of the place—your heart would have gone out in deepest pity for these miserable wretches—you would have thought of worse than the guillotine and thumb-screws, the rack and the flame.

Still they cried out: "We don't want to go to heaven, we don't want to go to heaven." Whereupon I replied: "No man is forced to enter there. Heaven is a place for willing souls alone. Just be quiet, men and women, and be damned, and hell will come sure and soon." And would you believe it, their cries were more pitiable than before. They were not willing to enter heaven, and yet afraid of hell. During their cries of anguish and the thunder peals of the gospel I awoke, and found there was something in a dream.

It is not proclaiming a strange truth, at least to some, that the most vigorous efforts of many souls are put forth

to keep out of heaven. Possibly, they would not seriously object to going there after death, but they absolutely want nothing to do with it while they live.

To men who have felt the thrill of the better life and know the joys of the Christian religion, the conduct of wicked men, particularly that of those who tremble at the thought of salvation, is inexplicable, save from the standard of the deceitfulness and hardening of sin.

It is marvelous and lamentable to contemplate how an intelligent being will sit under the sound of the gospel, will give his intellectual assent to the glorious teachings of the Book, know the verities of life and eternity, feel in his heart that salvation awaits the believer and damnation the unbeliever, and then walk away into the eternal blackness of despair. Sometime ago I asked a young man on the streets—a man who had frequently presented himself for prayer, if he wanted to—if he really was willing to be saved. To this he answered “No.” Alas! alas! men are making mock at religion. They are making believe with angels and trysting with devils.

Heaven is so far away and the pleasures of sin so sweet that the soul dares to trifle with its God, put off Mercy's call and crucify its last opportunity.

But you are not obliged to repent, nor enter the gates of pearl. Just sit still, wait 'till the waters of life run by, and in hell you will thirst forever. But this strange and abnormal view of life and the beyond is as simple, is as foolish as the man wild with delirium tremens, who starts and shrieks at the sight of imaginary monkeys and serpents. Crazed with drink the poor wretch sees hideous monsters which no other eye can discover, and hears awful

sounds which no other ear can catch, and feels in his soul the flames of hell which do not touch his pitying neighbor. So sin acts upon spiritual life. It distorts reason; it dulls sensibilities; it sears conscience; it perverts life, so that virtue seems a crime, and crime a virtue, and roses turn into thorns and angels into demons.

SELFISHNESS A GREAT CRIME.

No one can truly live the better life who clings to the selfish life. Self must be crucified if one would live with Christ.

The Master demands that we deny self, take up the daily cross and follow him. Not to do this is to deny Him. All self-centered lives exclude Jesus, and to leave Jesus out of the system, out of one's heart, out of one's thoughts, is to shut out the real glories of living and shut up the soul to meanness, and ultimately to eternal death. The man who lives for self lives below the line of sunshine; lives in such a narrow circle, that real heart peace can not enter nor peace beyond the grave. He who sets his heart most on self is blind and deaf and dumb and miserable to all other wants, all other comforts, all other interests; and he who stoops so low and lives on so mean a plane is prepared when opportunity presents, to steal, to lie, to defame, to murder; in a word, to run the gauntlet of crime. Let hell grow larger, let heaven grow smaller, let all men perish if only self may endure and stand upon the common ruin, it is satisfied. The love of the world makes heaven dull.

The world below and the world above are two distinctly opposing forces. Their interests are entirely unlike—unlike in purpose, in scope, in satisfaction, in points of duration.

Our world promises much, but fulfills little. The soul lays hold upon its pleasures and honors with avidity, with great eagerness, clings to these things, as though they could perfectly satisfy and satisfy forever. And clinging thus to the things of time and sense, the things of a joyous eternity and the things of the spirit slip from view. Nothing is so enduring as the things invisible and nothing so desirable as the bright things eternal. Heaven is not so far away from the man who lives not for the world, but is infinitely distant from him who sets his heart on the things of life. Pleasures, honors, riches, lust, lewdness and all worldly pursuits and conditions tend to contract the heart and stupify the soul and satisfy it with the blighting, damning sins of the world. A ten cent piece with the miser will hide the sun of righteousness. A green leaf from the chaplet of earthly honor will outshine all the glittering diadems of glory, and one little draught of earthly pleasure is sweeter than the cup of salvation with the nectar of infinite bliss poured into it.

Many years ago a man with his family was traveling through the western country seeking a home. They had pitched their tents where they expected to camp for a little season.

It was in a beautiful vale where the wild flowers grew luxuriously and the rich plumaged birds made the woods vocal with their finest notes and the laughing waters so fair and pellucid went murmuring by. The little girl had never seen anything half so beautiful. She sported with the breeze, sang with the birds, splashed in the waters, made love to the flowers.

She came in one day all radiant with pleasure and ex-

claimed: "O, papa, let's stay here always." To this her father replied: "We can't stay here, my child, we are only camping out." Would that the children of men might know they can't stay here—they are only camping out. Let us therefore touch this old world only lightly. Tarry not too long at its springs, nor hug the delusive phantoms of hope. The world's fairest flowers are soon perished.

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE CONFLICTS WITH THE CARNAL LIFE.

The religious life knows limitations, feels the power of divine prohibition, is governed by the highest and holiest passions.

The carnal life thinks on properties, thinks more of the opinions of man than the will of God, has greater regard for reputation than character, hates restriction, despises God's law and goes as far as it dares in the face of the law of man. Unrestrained by a better heredity and propitious environments and a dread of the Maker Himself, God only knows the infamies into which the human heart would ultimately plunge.

But in spite of these thousands and millions of souls are reeking in shame, leading the vilest and most dissolute lives—in the mansion as well as in the hut. Do not be deceived, the sleek rascals from the gilded halls are going to hell just as fast as the black devils from the filthy hovels.

The spiritual life says these glittering bubbles will burst after awhile, these honey draughts will turn to wormwood and gall, the syren's song so sweet to-day will be a dirge to-morrow, the green chaplet will soon fade on the victor's brow; this life promises without the ability to fulfill,

glitters without the power to light the weary traveler home, hears the cries of distress, sees the breakers ahead, knows the danger in wave and wind—feels the thrill of heavenly peace as the world is giving away. The carnal life says these are not bubbles, and so will not burst; this cup of pleasure is full and deep; these sweet songs ravish my soul; these honors and these glories satisfy me. I see no danger. I feel no alarm. I hear no wild breakers dash—if there is risk I dare take it. I'll make my journey home. So the carnal life is subject to flattery, to hypocrisy, to lying, stealing, murder; gloats in the gambler's hell, revels in the wine cup, stalks in scarlet robes, blasphemes like a fool, lives like a fool, dies like a fool, and goes to hell like a fool.

HEAVEN THE LAST THOUGHT OF A DESPERATE SINNER.

Suddenly or early to come into the Christian religion is regarded by the desperate sinner as a great hardship—a real calamity.

Young life is so buoyant, so hopeful, so set on business or pleasure that it really hasn't the time nor inclination for anything so dull or distant or unimportant as heaven.

Heaven and religious thoughts are regarded as great barriers to business pursuits and the enjoyments of the soul.

Indeed a pious life is thought of as a curse rather than a blessing.

The meeting house, the song service, the solemn sermon, the minister and all are looked upon as real hindrances to commerce and the happiness of society. Why give one's self over to the tears of repentance and to

serious reflections while the ball-room is so gay and the wine cup so sparkling and the fleshly life so voluptuous?

With the desperate sinner the higher, nobler life leads to disappointments, sadness, poverty. He associates the Christian religion with tears and heartaches and death and coffin and shroud and grave and tombstone.

If these awful things must come, reasons the foolish soul, let them come when the step is feeble and the locks are gray and there be no more heart nor power for glittering, fleeting things of earth.

Notwithstanding the good book says: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." And again: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found—call ye upon Him while He is near," the poor soul intoxicated by sin says: "Not now; if I ever seek it will be when I am old, when the pleasures of this old world have no further charms for me."

So the poor fool puts off the preparation day—waits 'till he is old—waits 'till Jesus of Nazareth passes by—waits 'till the gates of pearl closes forever.

FURTHER DESPERATION OF THE SINNER.

The desperate sinner, as far as possible, removes himself from the society of good men and women. He loves society, talks much about it, but it is the society of sinners of the wicked ones of earth—religious souls are dull and he chafes under the sermon, and the minister is too pious or he is insincere. Good people are bores and the thought of heaven gives pain. The dance house is preferred to the meeting house of the saints, the theatre to the cottage

prayer-meeting, the drunken revel to the Lord's Supper, vulgar speech and obscene pictures to tender words of prayer and visions of the glory world.

Preach to him: "Ye must be born again," and the pain he feels is almost infinite. Pray over him and your words are as mockery and he laughs at you and longs intensely to be gone. Try as best you may to lead the poor soul to God and he chafes and squirms as though heaven were the most accursed place of the eternal. It is as though one put honey before a hungry man and he dipped into vinegar, or offered the thirsty man cold water and he gulped down hemlock. Poor soul, be not so foolish, be not so desperate—drink not the deadly draught. To thy lips it may be sweet, but to thy soul it will prove the very bitterness of death.

A child throws a bank account away and picks up a flower—quite so the sinner tosses heaven aside and clings to the perishing things of earth.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION.

But the sinner may say, why call me desperate? Well, we will not be too hard on you, for we know you have been hardened by sin and hypnotized by Satan, but as best we can, let us reason together. Are not men born to die? Do they not die? How many living to-day one hundred years old? Very few. How many at the age of one hundred and fifty? Any? Let some one answer. Surely the millions and billions of earth here two hundred years ago have gone—the millions one hundred years ago have gone. A little over a hundred years to come not a soul of the billions now on earth will be left. All praisers, all blasphem-

ers, all the King's children, all the heirs of hell will have passed. How wonderful, how pitiful is the story, but how true! Every voice will be hushed—every heart will be still. It was so from the first. The Antediluvians with the flying centuries are piling up. The Ptolemys, the Pharaohs, the Alexanders, the Cæsars and all the proud monarchs of the Old World have passed and are passing. Kingdoms and dynasties are perishing, thrones are crumbling, crowns are fading and death, that ruthless and destructive reaper, is mowing down all things in his march.

Proud sinner, how think you to escape? Any favors with the conqueror death? Any lease on life? If so, how long? And then, when the lease is out, what then? Death, death. Poverty will not exempt. Riches will not buy favor. Honors will perish like bubbles. Death marks the high and the low.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT QUESTION.

But how will man spend the days that are going by?

It is worth while to mark time—to think seriously.

Can man, by thought or deed, change his state here or hereafter? All men die—the sinner dies. But what does that mean? Let God, the Maker, answer. "And after death the judgment." All shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ! Again: "Every one shall give an account of the deeds done in his own body."

"There is no repentance in the grave."

As a man goes out of the world so he shall enter the world to come. As he lives in time so shall he spend eternity. Can a man change his condition? Well, by his

perverseness, by his desperate resistance, by his stolid indifference, his condition may never be changed.

"Prepare to meet thy God."

"Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

A man cannot save himself, but he can fulfill the conditions of salvation—"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Surely any poor wretch can call for help. Any lost soul can cry to its Savior. Oh, is it not important—of the utmost importance—that the soul should prepare for the great beyond. The end of this life is heaven or hell, and in either case eternity.

Now is it not desperation of the wildest sort to live and die without God, to put off the plastic hours of youth, to go through the sturdy years of manhood, to come down to decrepid old age and still push heaven away, saying, "wait, wait!"

Sinner, life is uncertain but death is sure. At this hour your shroud may be made, the last nail driven in your coffin, and the horses and hearse standing ready to bear thy poor dust to the grave. Eternal issues may hang on this very hour. Be wise. Take Jesus to-night. Be not so desperate as to fling thy poor soul away. God help you now.

BIBLE PROMISE.

“And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

The Holiness of Joy.

“There is as much religion in a laugh as in a groan, in a smile as in a tear.”

He will weave no longer a spotted life of shreds and patches, but he will live with a divine unity. He will cease from what is base and frivolous in his life, and be content with all places, and with any service he can render. He will calmly front the morrow in the negligence of that trust that carries God with it, and so hath dread of the whole future in the bottom of the heart.—*R. W. Emerson.*

He who believes in God is not careful for the moment, but labors joyfully and with a great heart, “For He giveth His beloved, as in sleep.”

They must work and watch, yet never be careful or anxious, but commit all to Him, and live in serene tranquility; with a quiet heart, as one who sleeps safely and quietly.—*Martin Luther.*

VII.

Editorial from Atlanta Constitution.

The holiness of joy was never better presented than in the second sermon preached last night upon the subject by Rev. J. C. Solomon, of the Woodward Avenue Baptist church.

To those who read the scriptures carefully it is not necessary to recall the fact that the patriarchs were men who believed in the fullness of enjoyment. They did not hesitate to hold a feast upon proper occasion and to entertain a stranger in a manner to comfort his heart. It is somewhat a new idea to associate dyspepsia with religion, and it is against this growing inclination that Mr. Solomon protests. He would lead men by love to accept the higher ideals without an unnecessary threat to their fears. He would make the church a place of companionship and comradeship, where men, clasping hands, could feel that their brotherhood was one of fact and not of theory.

In taking this stand Mr. Solomon calls for optimism in religion. He truly feels that the majority of men are not bent upon self-destruction, though they may often make missteps, but that they are willing to reach forward and clasp the hand extended to lift them up and to point out to them the right way.

We cannot but feel that in this presentation of the holiness of joy of the place which it occupies in the development of religious feeling that Mr. Solomon has done a great service, and that he will become a great leader of men if he keeps up this method of presentation.

"I would not have my position misconstrued to-night. I desire to be understood by the dullest listener here. A good time in the world is not contradictory to the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is the outcome, yea, the logical sequence of the gospel. I believe as heartily as any of you, my friends, in salvation by grace, in a genuine repentance—in faith in God. Yes, I believe in blood religion, but—

"'Religion never was designed to make our pleasures less.'

"Were I to ask you what is the chief end of man, perhaps no two answers would be returned alike, but expressed or implied, his happiness would be involved.

"Some one might say: 'Man's great purpose and mission in the world is to be good and to do good; to glorify God;' but I would not say man was made by an all-wise Creator and placed in this beautiful world simply to have a dull time. Whether saint or sinner, great or small, a merciful and loving God has purposed that you get good out of life and put good in life and make the world better, brighter, gladder.

"A pauper out of hell may rejoice as well as a prince. A bootblack who does his duty is as honorable as the governor of the State, and being honorable, can afford to rejoice. Why should he be sad. King Edward has no more right from God and England to be happy than the rosy-cheeked boy who wades the streams or climbs the mountains. The ragged urchin on the streets may laugh, 'the man with the hoe' may sing as well as mop his brow, and the light-hearted lad behind the plow may whistle or speak the poetry of his soul to the upturned daisies as

he makes his honest furrows. The gladness of heart—the rosy dream of life—is the heritage of heaven. Who is so base as to take this crown away?

“But let us note some of the most prominent reasons for many of the churches being shorn of their strength. Why are there so many empty sanctuaries? What has given the people, especially the young people, such a distaste for places of public worship? Why, I believe with all my heart that too many preachers are dishing out dry theology and delivering polished prayers to the faithful few, too sleepy to hear, and to God, who is disgusted with dead formalities and meeting house rot. The world needs the rich, warm blood of Jesus. No theology, dry like rattling bones, can be its substitute. When a man is dying with thirst, give him no rounded periods, no beautiful paintings. The richest museum in the world cannot satisfy him. He needs water—the fresh sparkling water from the fountain of life.

“If your child is drowning shall I, with great pains and skill, first secure appliances approved by the masters before I put forth an effort to save him, or shall I sit on the bank and sing some up-to-date classical music and bid him be landed? No; I will be no such fool, but I will plunge in, clothes and all, and drag the precious fellow ashore. If your baby is in a burning building, would you sit down and discuss the origin of the fire or argue the necessity for a better fire organization in the town, or comment on the sublimity of the scene? No; though your life be in jeopardy, you will rush in smoke and fire and seize the child. Yet some preachers sport with the flames of hell and draw pictures of exquisite beauty. Why, I heard of

a preacher once who, with his sweet, flexible voice and flowing rhetoric, painted hell so beautifully that when he had finished, his auditors all wanted to go there. Let the pulpit be honest with the pew. Let men speak plain words to plain men. People are tired of essays and bouquets from the pulpit, of light rolls and puffs, of frills and trimmings. It is a shame to feed a fellow on air and clothe him with a rainbow when his soul is starving and he is naked before God. Now let us deal fairly with a hungry people, with perishing souls. Let us preach hell but 'never,' as one has said, 'except with tears in your eyes or heart.' Then the world wants to know about heaven. Many a poor heart has had enough of hell already. Dwell on the love of God. The wounded need healing. The sick need a cordial. The dying need Jesus. Show them the Savior and then their gloom will be lifted and their sorrows will fly away.

"When men get on fire for souls and their hearts melt with pity, then will the sanctuaries begin to fill and the good old times return. The pulpit ought to be a lighthouse and not a dungeon, an inspiration and not a cold douche. Let there go from it no whinings, no croakings, no calamity howls. Point men upward—paint heaven with all the enraptured beauty of God's unspeakable love. Girt the pulpit with more than rainbow glory. Crown it with the promises of the Almighty. Make it sing with the gladness of hope. Illumine every heart with the corruscations of heavenly optimism. Make the world glad with the gospel of peace.

"Again, too many of our churches are religious refrigerators. Real chilly sensations creep up and down a

stranger's vertebral column. He is ill at ease. He feels that he is in the wrong pew. He wants to go home. Nobody smiles upon him; no one gives him a friendly handshake; nobody welcomes him nor bids him come again. He comes and goes unobserved or stared at. Suffering he endures the service, but registers a vow that from henceforth he will seek a more genial clime. Why, he declares, there is a finer fellowship in the saloon, for the saloon smiles upon its patrons and is good mannered enough to ask you to come again. Is it any wonder that our parks and suburban resorts and soda founts and street cars and barrooms and gambling rinks and many hellholes in our cities are crowded when so many of the churches are open and reverberate with the voices of a lonesome few? With such treatment our schools, and even our homes, would suffer. Would they not go to pieces?

"A cold and heartless preacher has given many a fine fellow a good start for the lower world, and unsympathetic, sour-visaged old deacons have driven the young people away from the churches and shut the door of heaven in their faces. Men and women are hungry for sympathy and sigh for fellowship. Their souls cry out for joy and for the sunshine of life, and if their longings be not satisfied in our homes and our churches, be not surprised to find them at the bucket shops or turf exchange or barroom, or the shameless house or even in hell, for all these roads lead to the bottomless pit.

"You dare not quench the little stars that shine out in childhood or youth, lest you put out their light forever. Close not the mouth of innocent laughter, lest when that mouth should open again it should pour forth lamenta-

tions and dirges. You can't put an old head on young shoulders. You can't put a fifty year-old heart in a fifteen year-old body. You can't put young people in an ecclesiastical strait-jacket. They will break away from you, and they ought. The world is too large and beautiful, and pleasures are running riot, and our sons and daughters are reapers. Mirth bubbles up naturally from a full young heart, and laughter and singing spring forth from a happy life. Will you blot out this sunshine let down by a Master's hand? Will you dash the hallelujah of this beautiful old world with grating sounds and croaking of the meanest pessimism? Will you turn God's own light-houses into spiritual dungeons? Oh, let us not do so. We need no monasteries—the devil and the monks are welcome to these. The human heart is tired of cold formalities and the glittering ritualism of a dead church. Forms and styles and airy nothingness do not satisfy the soul all bruised with sin and hungry for fellowship. Strew them with flowers and sing real hymns of praise, no dirges. If you want to cry for joy, cry. If you want to shout, shout. If a hearty laugh will do thy soul good, why, there is no prohibition against it in all God's word. In a stilted church in New York a dear old lady plainly clad rose up one day fairly shouting for joy, whereupon a stern officer of that august organization promptly arrested her, inquiring, 'What does this mean?' To this the rejoicing saint replied: 'I've got religion.' 'We don't allow that in this church,' growled the proud official. Now, in the name of common sense, if our churches be not for the cultivation of religious life; indeed, if they be not real factories for making joy and sunshine for the world, and

weaving garments of beauty and righteousness, then why the churches?

"There is as much religion in a laugh as in a groan, in a smile as in a tear. Our houses of worship were never meant to be places of sighings and pinings and everlasting fault-finding. There is more religion and sense for a happy, truthful soul on a tennis-court than listening to a soporific preacher in a sweat-box physically."

"If we catch and hold the people against the world, the flesh and the devil, we must awake to the needs of the hour and make home and church and Christian life so real, so beautiful, so joyous, so heavenly that the devil and his emissaries cannot match them. When we make our religion hopeful and cordial; when we convince men we love them; when we teach the young it is not a sin to laugh and to romp, then will the cross be more attractive and the world bloom forth with fairer and sweeter flowers."

Thronging and Touching.

Mark 5:24-34.

And every common bush aflame with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.

—*Elizabeth Barrett Browning.*

One day I was sitting in a dark omnibus. A man came in to examine our tickets, and I thought to myself, you will never be able to tell whether they have been punctured aright. As I watched, curious to notice, he touched a little spring in his breast; in a tiny globe of glass a beautiful glow of electric light shone out. Manifestly the man could see anywhere, because he carried the light with which he saw. So we must understand that when the heart is full of God, you will find God anywhere and everywhere, as the miner carries the candle in his cap through the dark cavity of the earth, and lights his steps.—*F. B. Meyer.*

VIII.

One of the rulers of the Synagogue, Jairus, besought Jesus, falling at His feet, to go with him to heal his desperately sick child. Jesus was en route to the ruler's home. And as He went a great crowd surged about Him. Some doubtless were hungry and were following the Christ if happily He might perform some miracle and give them bread. Possibly some were following Him with a hope that they might find cause for accusation against Him, for He was in the midst of His enemies as well as friends. Again some were just lookers-on—an idle, curious, aimless crowd. To be sure His disciples were there and quite conspicuous, but they were ignorant of much of the power of the Christ-life. They did not understand their Master. He was constantly doing things that startled them.

But wherever He went he drew the crowds. "He could not be hid." Little children would gladly, joyously come into His presence. How they loved Him and how He loved them. The fine lady and the scarlet woman, the gentleman and the vagabond, the high and the low, the good and the bad, everywhere followed Him. The crowds would throng Him, so that it was said of Him that "the whole world is gone after Him." On this occasion there was a remarkable press of humanity. The people thronged Him and surged about Him like the restless sea, so that it would have been curious, almost phenomenal, had no one in that vast multitude come in bodily contact with Jesus. A poor woman, miserable and afflicted and destitute, having a bloody issue for twelve years and having narrowly

escaped with her life out of the hands of many physicians, came to Jesus. Now I am not going to throw off on the physicians—God bless the profession—God bless the wise, consecrated, sacrificing physicians, oftentimes angels of mercy in the sick room—benedictions in the land, but there are too many charletans and quacks. The afflicted poor may tremble at the tread of the impostors.

She said, "If I may but touch His clothes I shall be whole."

"And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up and she felt in her body that she was healed of the plague." Wonderful faith, wonderful cure! She touched and was healed. She believed and the blood was dried up. Now, it was not her faith that cured her of the bloody issue, for at other times she may have had, and doubtless did, great confidence in the many physicians who treated her, but instead of getting better she steadily grew worse. It was not therefore her faith that cured her, but the object of her faith. All depends upon what we believe and whom we trust.

A poor fellow believed in his guide—thought he was taking him away from danger to his own friends, but alas! he was delivered into the hands of his enemies, and was there murdered. His faith had sustained him and was all along very comforting but at last cost him his life blood.

We learn some valuable lessons from this story.

1. The Savior is never too busy to do good. On this very occasion he was going, and possibly in haste, to cure a little maid who was desperately ill. That home circle was in great distress. Loved ones were wringing their

hands and weeping over the precious child slowly sinking. They saw the palor spread over her cheeks. They saw the death glaze in her eye. They heard the rattle in her throat. The finest physicians had been called in. The best remedial agencies had failed. They hear of Jesus. He is sent for in haste. He is on His way, but stops to bless an afflicted and much abused woman. When in Simon's house preaching to a dense audience, the people crowded the doors and windows, the roof was torn open and a paralytic was let down in the midst of the multitude, and Jesus stopped preaching and healed the unfortunate.

When poor Mary and Martha were weeping all broken-hearted, straining their eyes for a glimpse of the Master, as their poor brother lay near death's door, Jesus tarried to heal other bleeding hearts and scatter blessings where curses grew. As he was passing on to Jericho, blind Bartimeus cried out: "Thou Son of David have mercy on me." Again he cried aloud for help. Jesus stopped and healed him. He was never in a hurry when suffering humanity appealed for help. Fatigue was never so great and sleep never so sweet, that He did not rise up and give comfort to saddened and bruised hearts. You remember when the blessed Master, tired from the day's toil, and overcome with slumber, lay asleep in the back part of the boat, the disciples, alarmed by the raging tempest, came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord save us; we perish." What did He do? "He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."

Oh, friends—troubled souls—think it not a tax on the blessed Lord nor a trial of His patience to pile all your burdens on Him. If you need Him do not hesitate to call

on Him. Take all your sins and sicknesses and sorrows to Him. He loves you, dear heart, and will never be too busy nor too tired to give you a blessing.

2. The Savior is always approachable. He never goes on stilts. He is a friend to the poor. He sympathizes with the sorrowful. He binds up the broken-hearted. He is touched with our infirmities. He is never stiff nor proud nor repulsive. He is not at all exclusive. He is not shut up to a few lords and earls and masters. The rich and the great have no monopoly on His time nor His blood. The meanest slave can claim His presence and His power.

Every ostracised soul, every prodigal son, every miserable outcast may feel perfectly comfortable in His presence. The brilliant trapping of state—the painful ceremonies, the cold formal etiquette of society, the danger and cruelty of snubbing—but no such exactions demanded by Jesus, no such dangers in approaching Him.

The master and the slave are on the same footing before Christ. No difference between king and peasant.

The Savior has no spells of melancholy—is not morose nor moody—is waiting to be sought after. Yea, is seeking after you. He stands in the midst of the camp. Is now before the door of your heart. Friend, you need no introduction. Your sins and sufferings commend you to Him. You need no state robe, no spotless gown, no badge of distinction, simply a consuming desire to come into His presence and to know Him. He is able. He is willing. He invites you. Riches will not buy His favor. Rags will not exclude you.

3. Those who simply throng Jesus lose a gracious opportunity always. A great motley crowd thronged Him at

the sycamore tree, but only one soul saved. Many were following after Him, but only the blind beggar received his sight. Thousands were in the press at the fish and loaf miracle and no spiritual feast. The hungry crowd simply thronged Him. Thousands and millions of earth's benighted inhabitants know nothing of Jesus theoretically nor historically. He comes not into their thoughts, for they have never heard that there was a Savior; poor, miserable Christless heathens! But here in Christian America, right here in Atlanta, this great city of churches, thousands of precious souls are losing opportunities daily of ever knowing Jesus. It is true He is not far away, right here in our midst, so close indeed that the poor wretched, ruined sinner has but to reach forth his hand and have the bloody issue of his sins all dried up. Just an arm's length off, and yet, my friend, if this little span is not compassed the distance will be as high as heaven, as deep as hell—"so near and yet so far." Many souls here this morning may be standing at the pearly gates. I must believe there are some here almost in the kingdom, but what matters it if at last from a glimpse of His face and the sound of His voice and the glow of His ministry, you drop into the pit? What's the matter? Why this dearth of salvation? Why, the people are simply thronging and not touching Jesus.

HOW THE PEOPLE THRONG HIM.

1. They throng Him by gathering about schools and churches.

There is a certain charm and magnetism about school buildings and churches that even the unrighteous would not part with it. A poor log school house, or the common-

est place where the saints worship, is far more attractive to the multitudes than the Savior Himself. A story is told of the frontiers. Many years ago as the tide of emigration began to turn toward the west the people desired a place of worship in that wild and unsettled country. So a petition was put in circulation looking toward the erection of a house of worship. Many had signed it, pledging small contributions, when a gentleman not a Christian subscribed \$300.00. He was asked if he had not made a mistake, the sum was so large. He replied: "No." On being questioned as to his liberality, he replied: "I have a great deal of property in this vicinity and this is a business stroke with me, for schools and churches always enhance values." He was thronging Christ—following Him for loaves and fishes. Strike down every school house and church building in Atlanta to-day and see how long before our business men (and men, too, who know no Savior) would vacate and seek for other cities holding these blessed institutions.

They know these civilizing and Christianizing factors bring trade, bring the people, bring business. So the world to-day, as it has ever done, is thronging Christ—making merchandise out of Christianity. How men cling to the casket and leave untouched the precious jewel. They make more of the ceremonies of death than life itself. Children will often run away with pretty wrappings and care naught for the valuable contents. Why did not the rabble gamble over the Savior's coat and go away unforgiven? They thought more of a garment than of heaven. Thronging, only thronging.

2. They throng Him in the sanctuary.

Thousands of poor souls are flocking to the house of God. They are not hungry; they have not the slightest appetite. Spiritual food is repulsive to them, they loath it. They have never cared to sit down to such a table. They will not eat for they are full. Heaven's richest cordial has no charm for them. The limpid waters of life may splash in their faces and yet they do not tempt. What's the trouble? Has the Son of God nothing good enough for a poor lost sinner? No; the sinner—the multitude of sinners—that throng our sanctuaries and throng our Savior will not drink, for they are not thirsty. The world's cup satisfies them. Is chaff better than wheat? Is wormwood better than honey? Is dross more valuable than gold? Is hell to be preferred to heaven? Lost soul answer these questions. Thronging is no solution. Go closer than that. Go right up to Jesus.

Oh, I have seen the surging crowds right in this place. I have seen you more than once throng the Lord—pack this house. Did any virtue go out of Him? Did you feel the giving away of your shackles of sin? Did a keen thrill of joy pierce your heart? Did you feel the inflowing virtue in your soul? Were you healed? You answer me “No.” Why not? Because you were a thronger, not a toucher—loitering, dreaming, aimless. You have no mission, no heartfelt desire to see and know Jesus. You came in with the crowd. You came to see what would happen. Dear soul, you have been running with the crowd too long already. For years you have been thronging Jesus and are growing worse.

Last summer when I was in New York pressing here and there through the great throng, I was lonesome and

had a real homesickness, wanted to see my loved ones in the Southland, wanted to talk with Jesus. Now come out from the crowd; press through and touch Jesus.

3. Touching.

It may be a touch in a crowd. How overwhelming is a crowd. How embarrassing. How hard to face. You may steal up to Christ in the night. You may find Him when you are alone with no eye to behold you and no hand to hinder. Nicodemus sought Christ at night and alone. Of course no one knew why he approached the Savior at that hour, but we must conclude he dared not face a crowd, he feared the critic and scoffer. To be sure salvation is salvation and is as sure and sweet when found alone and in the dark as in the midst of a throng and in the glare of day, but to win heaven—to find eternal life you may have to elbow your way through the crowd. It may be your only chance. Your last opportunity to find Him. Sometimes He may pass your way alone. At other times He may come with the multitude. You can't tell when He may pass your way the last time. I believe Bartimeus had his last opportunity. I believe Zacheus had his last opportunity. I believe the woman of our text had her last opportunity. This may be yours—its an awful thought. It makes me sick at heart to think of Jesus passing you by. The crowd may laugh and jeer and mock, but step forward, push your enemies aside and touch Jesus. Touch Him this morning and feel the healing, thrilling virtue of a heavenly presence. For a touch in a crowd is as good as a long embrace all alone with Him. You must touch Him or there's no healing.

1. The most timid may touch Him. This seems to be a

world in which the survival of the fittest prevails and men have declared: "To the victor belongs the spoils." The timid, shrinking mortal is at a great disadvantage in this busy, mercenary world of ours. Brass often outstrips brains and walks away with the trophy. There is a wild, mad rush for dollars and position, and in the scramble the timid are easily pushed aside. The cold mercantile life is no respecter of persons—cares naught for the timid and the retiring; the bold, the daring, easily forge to the front, but is there no sympathy, no help, no brother's hand for the poor fellow that trembles? See his whole frame is in a quiver; his feet are staggering; his face is blanched with dread. He has not the courage of his fellows, the daring and oftentimes heartless throngers that surge around the Christ, but he feels his need. He knows there is something that is lacking, something beyond him, something for which his heart sighs. The crowd overshadows him, awes him. He shrinks from public gaze. He is lost in a crowd and is unhappy—no help and no fellowship. He longs for a sight and a touch of the Son of God. Is there such a soul here this morning? Are you fearful? Do you stand trembling and doubting? Tremble no more; doubt no more. Do not be afraid. Jesus says, "It is I." Then come. Critics and scoffers and hypocrites and the curious and foolish disciples and mountains of difficulties may stand in your way, but after all, you are not far away from Jesus. The world may trample you underfoot; the brazen may make you crouch in fear; the tyrant may bind you in chains, but "a bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax He shall not quench." Say to them that are of a fearful heart, "be strong, fear not."

I have seen many a timid girl with face almost as white as death, but hungering for soul-healing, press through the crowd to touch Christ. Poor timid shrinking girls have a hard time to get along in the world—so much opposition and competition and criticism and heartlessness—cruel insinuations and dangerous snares; I tremble for you, I sympathize with you but Jesus stands for your safety. He is ready to deliver you.

Is there a dear woman in this presence who trembles not only in her timidity, but in her soul guiltiness? Have you been all these years an unbeliever, a poor lost sinner? Well, it is enough to make you tremble, but remember His hand is stretched out still. Come to Him, dear soul—come this minute; shut your eyes to the crowd, the crowd is not your friend—look alone to Jesus and touch the nail prints in His hand.

2. The disabled, the cripple, the invalid may touch Him.

How I sympathize with the soul that is hedged in, cut off from society, shut out of the sanctuary, shut up to days and nights of loneliness and pain and longing. Yet is this class not nearer heaven than they that walk the streets or Sabbath after Sabbath attend the house of prayer? Sometimes our largest opportunities and greatest resources prove our worst enemies and surest defeats. Let us not too strongly deprecate the condition of the invalid or lonely sufferer. After all he may be in the surest place and resting on the easiest bed. Yet the bed of pain and the invalid's room is not always as lonely as one might suppose. For here as in the busy outside world the crowd gathers which quite shuts out the view of the Master, not

a crowd of babbling, scoffing mortals, but an army of doubts and fears, and sin and a wasted life make a throng blacker than midnight, harder than adamant and greater in number than the flying swallows.

But courage, soul, my suffering friend, be brave. On your hobbling crutch you may yet find your way to Jesus. From your bed of invalidism you may tread the sure path to health. Christ is nearer than you think. He is even at your side. If your soul is set on heavenly healing you can make your passage. Just make a step, reach out your hand, it may be in the dark, but every foe shall stand back; the motley crowd shall give way—you shall touch Him and be healed.

3. The most abandoned may touch Him.

My poor soul has gotten much from the couplet:

“As long as the lamp holds out to burn
The vilest sinner may return.”

The love of God is as big as the world; no soul can outweigh His passion and His incomparable tragedy.

If He saved a thief while He Himself was dying, can not He now at the right hand of glory cleanse the foulest heart? “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” The good? No. The ordinary sinner? No. The respectable? No. The moral? No. But the whosoever, in any place, in any age, in any condition. “Look unto Me all ye ends of the earth and be ye saved for I am God, and besides Me there is none other.” Does this mean the fine lady? Yes. The fine gentleman? Yes. The precious child? Yes. The

noble hearted? Yes. But more—it means the drunkard, the blasphemer, the scarlet woman, the infidel. Ah! it means you, poor wretch; and you, poor lost soul; and you, outcast; and you, red-handed murderer; and you, vile sinner with crimes and shame of many years haunting you like so many ghosts. Your sins, I know, run very far, but they cannot go further than the ends of the earth. They may go very high, but God's mercy goes beyond the heights. They may go to the deepest depths, but His pardoning love can go deeper still. "Where sin doth abound, grace doth much more abound."

A poor fallen woman long steeped in sin and abandoned by her friends, was one day arrested on the streets for some crime. She was carried to the prison and locked up. A sweet Christian woman called, entered the cell where the poor wretch lay and putting her arms about her, kissed her on the cheek, and then told her about the love of God. It broke her heart, and as the tears streamed down her face she said, "That is the first kiss I've had since my mother died." Then she was pressed by the throng of all the sins of her ruined life, but she made her way to Christ, touched Him and was forgiven. Do not despair—there is a rift in the cloud—deliverance is near. You may be friendless and homeless, without reputation, without character, all polluted and despicable, but Jesus came to save such as you. So up with your shame and crime and make for Christ. Though ten thousand throngers may intervene, press on and press through, and though your sins be as scarlet Jesus shall make them white as snow.

4. He may be touched now.

The poor deluded soul says "no." He cannot be-

lieve so great a victory can be won so speedily. God is not so good, and heaven is so high. Sins are too many and the task is too great. The unbeliever must be a long time in believing; the sinner must be a long time in repenting. More prayers must be said; more tears must be shed and you are waiting to grow better. Let me tell you, man, you are cheating yourself out of heaven. You are shutting the door against your own soul. Your action is mockery to God, an insult to the Holy Spirit. God says, "Now is the day of salvation." You say, "Not so; another day will do as well." He says, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." You say, "I can't." "To-day if you hear my voice harden not your heart." You say, "I'll settle this to-morrow." So the days and weeks go by and the hardening process goes on, and your sins pile up and new difficulties arise. Still the Spirit cries, "Now, now." He is passing with the crowd—press forward, or you'll never reach Him. Touch Him, touch Him now and the self-same moment your sin-sick soul shall be healed.

The Blotting Out of Transgressions.

I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Is. 43:25.

Look at that Roman soldier as he pushed his spear into the very heart of the Godman. What a hellish deed! But what was the next thing that took place? Blood covered the spear! Oh! thank God, the blood covers sin. There was the blood covering that spear—the very point of it. The very crowning act of sin brought out the crowning act of love; the crowning act of wickedness was the crowning act of grace.—*Mocdy*.

The late venerable and godly Dr. Archibald Alexander, of Princeton, U. S., had been a preacher of Christ for sixty years, and a professor of divinity for forty. He died on the 2d of October, 1851. On his death-bed he was heard to say to a friend, "All my theology is reduced to the narrow compass—Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."—*Spurgeon*.

IX.

To my mind this is one of the sweetest texts in all the Bible. It is so far reaching, it is so deep, it is so high. As far out as sin may reach, as deep as the human heart, as far up as human iniquity has ever perched, our text most graciously extends. It meets the wants of the prince. It is quite sufficient for the pauper. It is the remedy for every age and it meets every condition.

The blotting out of our transgressions, the hiding of our shame, the forgetting of our sins! Oh, can there be any sweeter thought than this? From the remotest past down the avenues of time men have been trying to dispose of their sins, have thought to get rid of them, to flee from them forever. Some how in every breast, civilized or barbarian, learned or ignorant, there is a consciousness of sin. There is a restlessness, a sadness, something twitching at the heart, a troubled soul for the past, an anxious thought for the future. Deep shadows fall in men's lives and they are afraid. They tremble at serious sickness, they are awe-stricken at impending danger. They draw back at the approach of death. Ah, they dare not face the future, nor plunge into that awful beyond.

You see that poor son of toil as he plods along behind the plow yonder; the sun is pouring upon him its blistering rays, his heart is so hot and restless, his frame is so weary. He stops now and mops his brow and sighs for the day when no longer he will take the plow handles, nor swelter in the sun, poor soul! What brought him to all this? It was sin. See the woman there, that poor scarlet

woman with the back of every sister's hand to her, driven out from home, all virtue lost, all modesty gone, all hope buried, a once promising young life now all wrecked. Was it an accident, was it ill luck? Was it fate? No, no; it was sin. See down there in starvation alley a poor widow with a broken heart. Her house is but a hut—the rain pours through the roof, the wind comes whistling through the rent boards, the floor is all open. The children stand about in rags. There is no meal in the barrel, no oil in the cruse, not a garment in the wardrobe. The fire on the hearthstone has all died out. The children cry for bread and shiver in the cold, while the broken-hearted mother wrings her hands and mourns because she is unable to comfort her little ones. Thank God! there will be no starvation in heaven. What produces all these dire calamities? Is it nature's laws? Is it providence? No. It is sin.

It is sin that makes the gambler sit up all night and flch from his fellows that which makes him more of a wretch here and his damnation more sure hereafter. It is sin that fires the human heart, that lifts the hand that plunges the dagger into the victim's warm blood. It is sin that lays its infernal hands on some fair girl and smiles and promises and lies—then blackens and blasts and damns and leads at last her poor soul to hell. It is sin that leads some mother's boy away from home and altar and heaven's door and bedaubs his name with infamy, and makes him a drunkard, a robber, a rake. Sin robs the hearts of its peace, drives sunshine out of the home, dries up laughter in the lips, makes widows and orphans, causes children to stand in abject dread, drags virtue in the streets, outrages all decency, wrests babes from their mother's arms, fills

murderers' graves, makes rosy cheeks blanch, breaks iron constitutions, stains the face with tears, snaps heartstrings, crushes out all hope, strikes down every glimmering star, hushes sweet song into silence, makes the soul writhe in pain, the world stagger in darkness, and the home shriek with the despairing cries of hell. That is sin.

A poor man working for fifty cents a day is trudging along in the dusty streets. His heart is stirred with bitterness, and with clinched fists and a scowl on his brow he mutters out an oath against the fair-faced, kid-glove capitalist, while the capitalist in broad-cloth sitting proudly in his carriage, looks in disdain upon the son of toil, as his own fiery chargers dash past him. The poor man bitterly hates the rich man. The rich man values the poor man at what he can make out of him. Oh, this grinding, this everlasting grinding between the upper and nether millstone of life—this chasm between capital and labor. What makes it? Sin. Alienation between brothers and sisters? Sin. Unkindness, cruelty, separation of husband and wife? Sin.

But there comes at times a longing in the human heart for freedom. Such an overpowering—such a crushing weight into the life that one feels undone, miserable, lost, and so he begins to seek for a remedy. If he be a drunkard, having often debauched his own manhood and outraged society and brought disgrace upon his family, he seeks by will power or tonics or better environments to leave off the accursed drink. Well, he succeeds, but has his soul been relieved? The stains are still there. He is still unwashed. He may be fit for society and fit for home, but not fit for heaven. Sobriety is a beautiful virtue but it is not salvation from sin. The harlot may leave the shameless house

and come into the respectable home and enjoy the confidence of all people, but is she not a sinner still? A beautiful reformation, but she is still unwashed of His blood. Her burning need is the blotting out of her transgressions. Men from one incentive or another some time leave off and rise above these practices, that undermine the body or impair the mind or outrage society, and when such reeking sins have been lopped off how comfortable they feel. Ah, how foul, how putrid still. Sin has soaked through. The stains are black. The soul is yet untouched of Calvary. Leaving off is not blotting out. Reforming is not repenting. Reforming from outward commissions does not move the inward corruption.

Sin is like the heavy winter rain, it goes deep. It is like indelible ink, it does not come out with a common washing. No ordinary means can remove it. When I was a small boy living on the farm, my father bought me a beautiful coat one day. How happy I was, for store-bought coats didn't come often. I put it on and strutted around like a prince. But alas! my joy was soon turned into sorrow. My heart broke when I spilt some grease on one of the lappels; my new coat was spoiled so soon. What must I do? Well, I washed the spot with soap and water and sponged it. I even scraped it with my knife.

I called in all the doctors on grease and after many prescriptions and patient nursing I thought the patient was cured. The coat looked so fresh again and I was so happy. In my boyish glee I jumped up and down and ran out in the yard and road. After being long at play the sun poured upon the lame spot on my coat and the dust settled there, and would you believe it, that old grease spot looked

twice as big as it ever was. So it is with the sinner. He is very proud of his reputation—thinks well of his moral coat and tries hard to keep it clean. In his own strength he is trying to remove the stain and rub out the sin and extirpate the gangreen that lies deep in the soul. Sometimes he is much pleased at his progress, but the Spirit appeals to his heart, and his conscience is aroused. He realizes at last his helpless, lost condition and looks to Jesus. Friends, you may be good legislators, but you can not enact laws that will govern or outlaw or silence sin, nor can you repeal the law: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." You may be a good physician, but you have no cathartic in all your pharmacopeia to drive sin out of the system, nor any anesthetic to put to sleep forever. You may be philosophers, ever so wise, but you can have no learning so lofty, nor witchery sufficient to charm away sin. Like Banquo's ghost, it will not down at your bidding.

Prayers cannot breathe sins away. Penance cannot atone. Your own blood cannot cover them. Your tears cannot wash them away.

. "What can wash away your sins?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

Oh, the text is so comforting—it is like a song in the night. It is light springing out of darkness. "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions."

Years ago I stood on the Cumberland Beach watching old ocean as the angry waves rolled high upon each other, breaking into myriad sprays. They looked like dazzling white spires pointing heavenward.

I stooped down and wrote my name in the pebbly beach and stood back and watched the tide as it rolled majestically in. The tide then went out slowly, grandly. I looked for my name, but it was gone. How like the blood of Jesus. I looked once and saw my poor soul all blackened by sin and gashed by the deep furrow of Satan. Damnation was written all over me and I felt my feet slipping away into hell. I looked up and cried for deliverance. I looked again. Where were the wounds, all the black gashes of sin? Why, the crimson tide of Calvary had rolled in over my soul and they were gone. They had been blotted out.

Have you sins to-night? Are they black and ugly? Do they threaten to destroy your happiness forever and to land you in hell at last? Then come, poor soul, to Calvary and Jesus with His pierced hands will run over thy account, let it be ever so large, let thy crimes be ever so black. The ledger shall be clear when His blood covers thy guilt, for all thy transgressions shall be blotted out.

WILL THEY ALL BE COVERED.

Never fear, Jesus does not do things by halves. Listen to the Psalmist: "Purge me with hysop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Again God's pleading with the sinner: "Come, let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." God tells us that our sins are nailed to the tree and cast from us as far as the East from the West. Again He declares "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." God is almighty and He is all

willing. He is also all righteous. Can such a God as that allow one single sin to come into His presence? No, no, no; let it be ever so small and it would make heaven unheavenly and turn bliss into grief.

The Holy Spirit was doing a most gracious work in Dr. Manley's school in South Carolina. Many of the students were being saved. A bright little girl came running to the Doctor, saying: "Dr. Manley, God has forgiven some of my sins," and seemed quite happy. At this Dr. Manley showed his disappointment and said, "No, no, my child, God doesn't do His work that way. He has either forgiven all your sins or He hasn't forgiven any." The child was grieved, and went away pouting, but it was an arrow sent to her heart. It drove her to her knees. The next morning she came again, her face this time all radiant with joy. She cried out: "Dr. Manley, what you said yesterday was true. God had not forgiven any of my sins, but I am so happy now, for they are all gone." But some one is trembling, doubting lest your sins be too black, too many. Not so, my friend, for though your sins go as deep as hell or pierce the stars, or multiply like the sands of the seashore, yet His blood can cover them all—His blessed hands can blot them all out. Only believe, only believe.

BUT WILL THEY STAY BLOTTED OUT.

This is a question that is troubling many a poor soul. One exclaims: "I know the good God can blot out all my sins. I know He is willing, but when I blunder again, and when I fall what will become of me then—will Jesus' blood cover my sins always? Did He not die on the cross once for all? Can he offer Himself a second time? Would he not be less than Savior to die again?"

Hear Him as He cries out in the tenth chapter of John: "And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Listen to the rapturous words of Paul as he closes the memorable eighth chapter of Romans: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." Oh, we are "justified by His blood." We have "redemption through His blood." It is called "precious blood." Why? Because it saves perfectly—saves for eternity. If the blood covers your sins, nor man nor demons nor angels can find them again. Thank God, they are gone forever! The blood of the cross makes a perfect covering, for it covers completely and it never wears out. We cover our sins, but they are soon exposed. No covering we can make can hide our guilt from the eye and the wrath of the Almighty.

A little boy listening to a lecture on the Omnipotence of God said: "I know one thing God can't do." "What is that?" was asked. "God can't see my sins through Jesus' blood." That He can't. Blessed thought! Then bring your poor soul under the crimson hand of Jesus and have all your sins blotted out.

FOR WHOSE SAKE.

God loved Israel, but it was not for Israel's sake. He loved, and still loves the sinner, but it is not for the sinner's sake that He saves. Yes, He loves the world. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,

that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Again He commands us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Yes, He loves us and saves, blots out our transgressions, not for our own sake, but "mine own sake," He emphatically declares.

Study our text in connection with Ezekiel xxxvi:21, 22, and think more on the glory of God and the majesty of His name.

THE FORGETFULNESS OF GOD.

God says: "And I will not remember thy sins." Then He must have forgotten them, since he once knew them. O, the blessed forgetfulness of God. How sweet, how unspeakably glorious to have our sins not only blotted out, but absolutely forgotten. What if man does remember our sins, God forgets them, that is enough. I remember my sins. I can say with David: "My sins are ever before me." I reckon it is well that it is so, for to remember our sins is to remember His blood. Such memory keeps us penitent and humble, and drives us to the cross. Oh, it makes us tender and gives us an infinite longing to be like Christ, to be with Him.

How often have I wished from my heart that I might flee from the memory of sins. I remember the sins of my youth and of other days. How black they are in my sight. They once made the sweat-drops stand on my brow and temple, and the veins strut in my neck. I see them now. I try to shut my eyes to them. They stare at me. I tremble at the very thought. I can never forgive myself for those old-time sins, much less forget; but they are forgiven and for-

gotten of a merciful Lord. I can imagine a scene at the Judgment. A most vile sinner washed in the blood stands trembling before all nations and says: "Judge, don't you remember how in yonder world I did crimes black as night; how I disgraced home and outraged all decency; Judge, don't you remember?" And the blessed Jesus, looking in infinite pity upon the poor soul, says: "No, no; I've forgotten all about it." A husband who, in time, had been a very terror to his home now steps up and says: "Judge, don't you remember how faithless I was, and how cruel; how I beat my poor little wife till she trembled and bled before my brutish face?" "No, my son, I remember no wrong against you. The past is all dead." Another steps up, a mother this time: "Judge, I can never get over it, my heart hurts me so. Don't you remember how, in my unholy passion, I struck my little one down and sent him to bed unwept, unkissed, unhugged, unloved? You remember how he cried and sobbed and begged me to kiss him. Then the fever set in and soon we laid him in his grave, and then my heart broke. Judge, don't you remember?"

The Savior looked with more than usual compassion upon his blood-washed child and says: "I know nothing of it, I've forgotten all."

And all the blood-washed throng files into his presence and stands before the judgment seat. In vain does each soul strive to call to the Judge's remembrance the crimes and sins of these unhappy days, but He simply smiles, saying, "I've forgotten all there is against you."

But He opens the great book of remembrance now before Him and says all your good deeds are recorded here.

I see where you gave a cup of cold water to a disciple, and where you fed a poor widow, and where you clothed an orphan, and where you entertained a stranger, and where you visited the sick, and where you wiped away the scalding tear. Oh, I remember all your sacrifices and sufferings for my sake. Pass through; pass through the gates of pearl. May it be so with all who hear me to-night.

The Lord's Shut-Ins.

And the Lord shut Him in.—Gen. 7:16.

Nothing is intolerable that is necessary. Now God hath bound thy trouble upon thee with a design to try thee, and with purposes to reward and crown thee.

These cords thou canst not break; and therefore lie thou down gently, and suffer the hand of God to do what he please.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

All my life I still have found,
And I will forget it never,
Every sorrow hath its bound,
And no cross endures forever.
All things else have but their day,
God's love only lasts for aye.

—*P. Gerhardt.*

X.

We shall have to deal with the flood and the providence of God this morning. And strange enough, there are many traditions of the deluge. Many nations and tongues and tribes, and those too, who were godless and heathen have had their own peculiar notions and accounts of the flood. They are all interesting, but erroneous, for they differ from the simple Bible story. Wonderful that these people who are without the truth, who knew not our God, who lived in the twilight of the ages, should be thinking and dreaming of the flood. Was it a happen so? Was it a coincident? Was it a kind of providential opening of God's strange thoughts and actions in those far-off days? We know not, we can not understand. Some things are inexplicable. But the Spirit has moved upon the face of the deep and the nation's mental and spiritual darkness has been penetrated here and there by the kindly glintings of God's awakening providences, and through them men have looked up and seen the Infinite.

But what of the flood that swept the people and beasts and fowls and all creeping things from the face of the earth? Why this miserable wreckage? Why this awful breaking up of the depths? Why this terrible battling against the black waters? Why these moans and lamentations from the dying? Hear the wild heart-shrieks of mothers as they cling convulsively to their little ones. Hear the helpless children as their piteous cries mingle with the breaking billows. See the men, once strong and brave and defiant, and infidelic and agnostic, and blasphemous, now

pale and frantic and helpless and crying for mercy. Why this wild and unparallel disaster? this sharpest and most colossal exhibition of God Almighty's wrath? It was sin. The great God was outraged by the wickedness of the people. His patience and His long suffering were infinite, but unbelief and crime provoked Him at last, and then, with His fury, He swept the wicked from off the face of the earth. Even now, God is bearing patiently with the wicked, but their crimes are piling up, and sooner or later, with terrific force, will come crashing upon their heads.

But at that early day God had a people, and in His own time, and by His own methods, He showed His wondrous mercy to eight persons: Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives, and two male and female of every kind of beast and bird and fish and creeping thing on the earth, and saved them from the flood.

What was the plan? Noah, the marvelous architect and builder, built an ark after the divine pattern of Gopher wood, three hundred feet long, fifty feet wide, thirty feet high, and pitched it with pitch inside and out. The ark was three stories high with one door and one window. Beautiful type of Christ. The ark was strong enough to withstand the shock of the deluge—so Christ withstands, and **ever shall withstand the rage of men and devils.** The ark was pitched with pitch inside and out, and kept out the waters and weathered the storm and sailed in safety to Mt. Ararat. So Christ faced His enemies with the finest passion of His soul-love. His blood was the beautiful cement that made safe and comfortable the ark of our souls. He faces the very storms of hell, and will bear us safely over every billow and in triumph land us home.

The ark was three hundred feet long, fifty feet wide and thirty feet high, three stories high. So in Christ there is ample room for every man that will enter for salvation. Thank God! In Him no poor soul shall seek safety from flood or flame and sink in despair.

There was a window to the ark. We know not the uses of windows unless they are to let in sunshine and air and views of God's matchless landscapes and paintings of earth, sea and sky. So in Christ we find our spiritual window, which lets the sunshine of God's everlasting love and the soft breezes which sweep from the shining heights of glory and scenes of indescribable loveliness—the purling water of paradise and visions of angels and waving trees along the emerald bank, and glittering chariots and streets of gold, and ivory thrones and scepters of power and crown of unrivaled luster, and life crowned with honor and glory and shot through and through with the quivering shafts of peace.

Then there was the door to the ark—and the door was on the side. What blessings and what comforts there are in doors—doors that are well-made and properly adjusted, that open and shut for the safety and convenience of the occupant. What a miserable failure Noah's ark would have been without a door? All its strength and capaciousness and beauty and splendid appointments would have been practically useless had there been no door. The door admitted the occupants into the ark and shut out the flood and the driving rain and the cutting blast and the enemies of God and a watery grave. So we have our door in Christ. Christ is the door; there is no other. Into His side the Roman steel entered, and on his brow a cruel crown of

thorns was pressed, while through his quivering hands and feet the deadly spikes were driven. It was a great day when the fountain opened up in the house of David. On Calvary, mid darkness and groans and rending of rocks and shouts and derision, the door of hope, the door of life, and the door of heaven was opened.

By faith we enter and by His mercy, His unspeakable grace, He shuts us in from ruin, shuts us in from hell, shuts us in now, shuts us in forever. Thank God for the door—the open door that admits all His people.

“And the Lord shut him in.” Noah did not shut himself in. He was under the guidance of God, was following the lead of the Divine Spirit; was clay in the potter’s hands. The Supreme Architect gave him the pattern. The work was done and the grand old boat was ready to be launched, but there was no command to shut the door. Noah was righteous and wise and skillful, but evidently he knew not how to close the door.

Well, if Noah was ignorant of this art, or was not permitted to do so noble and so gracious a service, surely no member of his family might be so honored.

Nor did the angels “shut him in.” The angels are the servants of man as well as the servants of God. And not only do they serve us here, but will serve us in heaven, and it will be a perfect service, for they are full of heavenly knowledge and power and grace. Their service here and now is wonderful and gracious. I know not how we would dispense with it, even in this life.

Methinks it would have been a delightful task for them to shut in this antediluvian family, but whether they had the power or knowledge to perform this wonderful min-

istry, God in His wisdom did not see fit to commit this task into their hands.

The devils didn't shut him in. I do not believe they could have shut him in, but granting their power they would certainly never have done so strange a thing. It is unlike a devil to do a sweet service. There is no goodness and no mercy in his life. He is bent on destruction. His everlasting mission is to destroy and to damn. To shut Noah in means to save him. Hell never purposed salvation. Damnation alone is her glory. No, the devils never shut in.

"And the Lord shut him in."

How comforting, how refreshing in a weary land to know the Lord is leading us, and His own hand is saving us.

For man or angel or devil to have shut Noah in would have destroyed the force and beauty of the figure, would have made the symbol meaningless. The ark prefigures better things to come, speaks eloquently of a better life and a brighter morning. Through the ark we catch visions of a far brighter ship, a ship all crimson with His blood and resplendant with the whiteness of salvation and peace.

The ark, the ark; what a fine type of Jesus the Savior, our spiritual ark, the one that saves from the deluge of God's wrath and the black waters of death.

Only God could have shut in the eight persons from the depths; then, not another than the Infinite could devise and execute our deliverance. In Him the rising tide can never reach the soul. Storms may howl and billôws dash and demons rage, yet we shall sail on to greater than Ararat heights, anchor at last in the everlasting haven, our heavenly home.

I want to speak now on the providences of God. And I want to say right here that I do not believe, as some believe, to wit: that God made His laws and set all things animate and inanimate a going, and took no further notice of them; had no care for His creatures. Does He not note the sparrow's fall? Does He not count the hairs on our heads? Does He not care for His own? Law, or no law, is He not pledged to provide for the elect? Certainly we have scriptures for this position. He who made law is surely greater than law—can change law—can hold law in abeyance. He can do this or He is not God. Did He not overcome the law when Peter and his Savior walked upon the water? Where was law when frogs and vermin and hail of fire and water-courses of blood were playing havoc with Egypt? Where was law when, by the rod of Moses, the Mighty One made the Red Sea stand apart like brazen columns? When the winds were blowing gales from the east and the skies were raining down light-bread and the flinty stones were pouring forth great streams of limpid waters, was not law set aside? I would not belittle the laws—the grand laws of God. They are His and what he made is good, but let us know He can overrule and override and tear down and set aside as well as build up and strengthen. He is God—Omnipotent; grass grows according to natural laws. If I put my hand in the fire I suffer. If a child falls into the waters above its head it drowns. And yet God can take the vitality out of the grass and the heat out of the flame and death out of the waters.

God shuts us in by sickness.

Some say God permits sickness and afflictions to come upon us. Well, that is true. For is it not in His power

to prevent it? For He has power over the body as He has over the soul. He is the master of nature as well as the master of divinity. Certainly He permits diseases or they never would come. But is there anything especially comforting in this thought? God permits sin and yet what sinner rejoices over the fact? My brother, it does not throw you into ecstasies to contemplate this strange doctrine. You rejoice but not in the existence of the evil—rather over your deliverance from the evil.

Is there not Bible doctrine to the effect that He afflicts His children? Did He not give His own Son into the hands of the enemy? Did He not deliver Job into the hands of the devil and of his tormentors? Did He not frequently afflict, even fight against the children of Israel? Yes, all along down the ages God has been marking His people with afflictions.

Paul begged for the removal of the thorn from his side, but we have no account of the lifting of this affliction. God shut him in. Poor Robert Hall was shut in by a tired body, was shut in by fatigue and pain. He used often to cry for that everlasting rest. Spurgeon was a great sufferer. For weeks at a time he was shut in by sickness.

Poor Edward Payson was shut in by a stitch in his side—suffered agonies, and often with his hand clutching at his aching body he would lean over and weep out his sermons to melting congregations.

The knightly Coats was not infrequently shut in by splitting headaches and other physical infirmities, but God used him mightily in the extension of His kingdom.

The eloquent Edge, one of the finest pulpit orators in

this country, oftentimes in his weakness, dragged himself up into his pulpit and sometimes could scarcely finish his discourse on account of fits of coughing, but so powerful was his burning oratory that he would at times lift his great audience to their feet. He was shut in by bronchitis; shut in by pain; yea, the Lord shut him in.

Many a fine saint is shut in with incurable maladies and bodily weaknesses. There is the poor old mother, all bent with rheumatism, no longer able to attend the sanctuary. There is the poor fellow that's blind. Day and night are all alike to him. Can not see any more the face of his loved ones; nor flower, nor bird, nor stream, nor star. Then there are the deaf, on whose ears never break the laughter of childhood nor the sweet-toned orchestra, nor hymns of praises. Shut up to the unbroken, the everlasting silence of earth. And the cripple and the halt and the maimed and the fever-tossed and the bed-ridden. The dear girl with wasted limb and sunken chest and aching side, as she lives propped up in bed, looks wearily out into the yard or streets, and sees the children at play, but alas, she is shut in for days, for weeks, for months.

The hunchback is ostracised. The boys will not play with him. He is shut in. The poor lad lies on his back and cries out day and night with his white swelling. Pains almost like the pains of hell seize him and his very bones work out of his flesh. He is shut in.

God does not afflict His people aimlessly—to no purpose. He takes no pleasure in their sicknesses and sufferings. If He lays His hand heavily upon His child, it is that He might bring him nearer to Himself. If He puts us on crutches—if He knocks our props from beneath us

and stretches us on beds of fever; if He presses a crown of thorns upon our temples, or pierces our sides with the cold steel; if He shuts us off from the sunshine of the world and from much of the sweet fellowship here below. Oh, if He shuts the door and bars out the ringing laughter of innocence and cuts off the view of the skies, and makes this old world a prison home, He is only preparing us for a better life; getting us ready for the home journey. My friends, if God makes for you this world a dungeon, it is only that He might lift your eyes toward your palace home. If He burns you with fever, if He goads you with pain, if He lays you out with some long distressing sickness, it is that He would fan your cheek some day with the breath that blows from off the Immortal Hill and give you for every darting pain a thrill of paradisial peace, and create on your sick bed a longing for the skies and that rosy health which flushes the face of every citizen of the City of God.

Spurgeon says: "Sickness is the best thing in the world." Possibly nothing so humbles the pride of a soul as affliction. It quite takes the starch out of a fellow and shows him his weakness and his helplessness. It enables him to look up and away from himself. On his back the poor sufferer may see more mercies dripping from the finger tips of Providence than ever he discerned on his feet. Afflictions are like the wine press; they get the best out of us. They fit us better for service. They make us more tender and sweet.

Thank God for the shut-ins, for thou, dear Lord, dost go in Thyself, and they find more heaven in the dark and alone than they ever found in the glare of day and in the

surging crowds. Some weeks ago God's hand fell upon me, and for many days I was shut in with the most excruciating pains. It seemed that every bone in my left arm and shoulder would break, and at times I would cry out in agony—what does all this mean? It means I have learned a new lesson for life and brought up a fresh pearl from the depths. Through the refining process of suffering I have been lifted nearer to God, and I am happier than I have been for many a day. It has given me a mellowness I never knew before—enlarged my sympathies, strengthened my faith and my love for you, my people, stirs with an unusual intensity. I bless God for sickness, for its a means of grace, and one supremely precious thought, when He shuts His people in He does not shut Himself out.

I know a man to-day in the State of Georgia, shut in by inflammatory rheumatism. For many years he was a frequenter of the saloon, and doing many things displeasing to the Master—dishonoring the Lord and doing violence to his church obligations, but the Lord shut him in, and now he is so gentle and his heart is so tender and heaven is dearer. Oh, the uplifting power of affliction!

SHUT IN BY BUSINESS REVERSES.

God is not shut up to means of grace. He can not be bound, nor circumscribed. If He can bring back a prodigal by affliction or polish a spiritual stone by the refining process of suffering, He can just as easily break the human heart or subdue the untamed spirit by taking away his property. His providences are wonderful, and the methods He adopts in securing the affections and services of His

children are multitudinous. If the father reaches not the child with kindness He brings him round with the rod. If the soft sunshine of heaven entice not the feet of the wayward, then with the storm of divine purpose He drives him to the path of mercy and peace. Many thousands are shut in to-day by poverty. Riches do not often point men to Jesus; they have brought more thorns than roses, more curses than blessings.

In the hands of many men property has shrunk—just melted like snow in the sun. What's the matter? Good morals, good judgment, good environments, and yet the poor fellow goes to the wall. Who knows but that God saw in his riches the snare to his soul, and the bar to his spiritual power? Our losses are oftentimes wings to our souls, while our profits may prove our millstones. My friends, are you greatly reduced? Do you find it hard to make buckle and tongue meet? If you have made an honest, faithful effort, chide not yourself. It is God shutting you in. So do not worry, nor fret; these are simply your school days, and after your fine discipline you shall go out into a larger service and enjoy a sweeter fellowship with the Master and the saints than you had ever dreamed of.

A short time ago there was a shortage in one of the lanks. Suspicions arose and the suspect fled across the seas. Just a few days ago he was brought back by the officers of the law, and is now awaiting trial on the charge of embezzlement. His tether was too long. Young man, murmur not if God should shorten yours. It is a mark of His affection. If He should shut you in He would keep you from evil. He would reserve better things for you.

A poor, miserly wretch says when he comes to die, "I am worth a hundred thousand dollars," and clutching his immense wealth he sinks down to infinite depths of pauperism. That was all he was worth—just \$100,000. Gained that and flung away his soul—lost heaven. When riches fail, when business reverses come, when poverty stalks into your home, rejoice and praise God, for to be shut in with Him means more than all liberty with the devil.

SHUT IN BY HOME TRIALS.

Possibly nothing so influences character as life at home. Home influence touches us at every angle—make impressions here that last for eternity.

God oftentimes makes the home the best by hard and cutting experiences; envelopes it in the darkest clouds, even baptizes it in blood and tears. Home is never so gracious nor like heaven as when visited by some tearful sorrow. To be shut in with some invalid child, or your poor decrepit mother, or some pale-faced sufferer, or your own precious dear—then to be shut in with your loss and your sacred grief it would seem the very taunting of divinity, the cruelty of heaven. The world pities, but the angels are ready to strike their harps. Hearts may be making merry in the house of feasting, but your home of mourning may prove, as has been the case, the very ante-chamber to glory. One of the sweetest gospel preachers that ever told the old, old story, known over the South as the John of his denomination, has had his heart strings torn—has drunk his cup of wormwood and gall. Few men have tasted such bitterness. He has had

in the deepest sense his Gethsemane and he has known his Calvary. Calamity after calamity has come into his home, afflictions have trodden upon him with cruel heels, and tragic death has more than once cut off his children. Shut in so long and so deep, but like the grape in the press, the sweetest cordial comes from his broken life, and as the crushed rose emits its fragrance on the air, so his troubles have sanctified his ministry and made him a sweet benediction to the people. Shut in; who would rebel at the dungeon, who would mind sorrow, who would tremble or curse at death, if by these means one should find a closer fellowship with the good and have heaven to bloom practically in his heart? When Dias was shut in the Morro Castle for preaching the gospel on the streets of Havana, he said the Lord Jesus was shut in with him and he was so happy.

To be shut in with God means the devil shut out. The Lord knows best. The severest discipline here must mean the finest triumph and the keenest joy up yonder.

One last word, my friends: All your liberty and possessions and joy here will avail you nothing, if at last you shall be among the "Shut-outs" at the pearly gates. Oh, let the Lord's shut-ins rejoice and shout for gladness. He is keeping them from disgrace, shutting them from the tempter's snare. Young man, He would keep your hand out of your employer's pocket and keep your poor soul from shipwreck. Then enter in the open door. Christ is the ark. Never did any ship so successfully ply the black waters as the ship of Zion. The rudder and the stern are strong, the deck is spacious, and a berth is ready for every voyager. The sails are all unfurled, and the chart and

compass complete, and the pilot at his post. No one was ever lost who entered this ship. There can be no shipwreck with the captain of our salvation at the helm. Then get on board, for the night shades are gathering and the clouds are lowering and the storm is brewing. The old sea is being lashed into fury. Embark, embark now. Strike for the hill country—the land of myrrh and spices. This country is filled with pitfalls and death. It is not your home. Oh, look to Jesus—He died to save you. There is a fountain opened up in His side. Plunge in. Don't wait too long. Come now. Shut in from sin and sorrow, temptation and sickness and death and hell—shut in with God and loved ones—shut in heaven—shut in forever.

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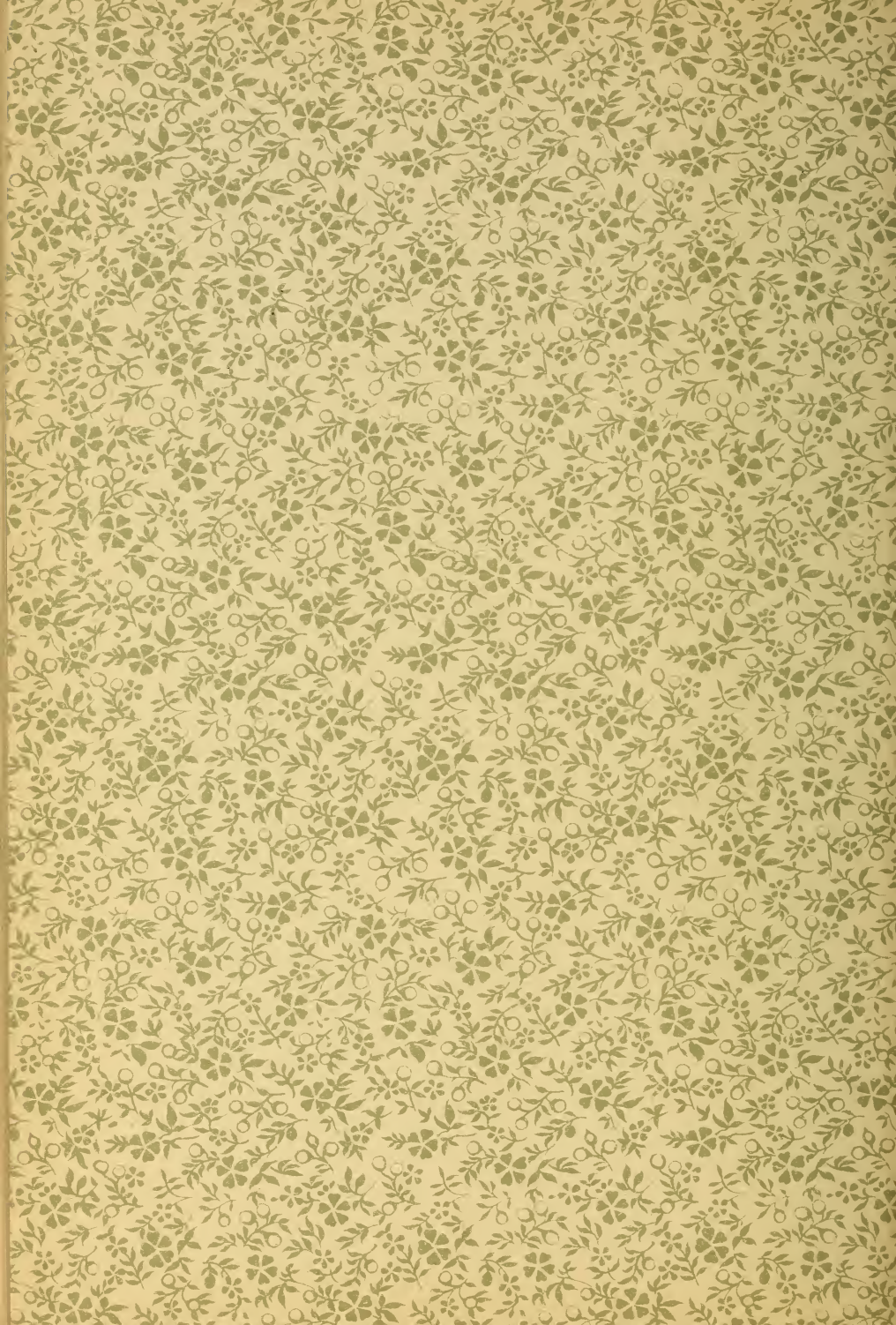
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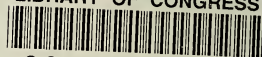
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